SYPHON FILTER, SILENT HILL, LEGEND OF LEGAIA PREVIEWED INSIDE!

Volume 4 • Issue 3 • February 1999

PS Extreme

THE PLAYER'S [illegible] MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE PLAYSTATION

OF VAMPIRES AND VOODOO:
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THE DARK SIDE OF GAMING

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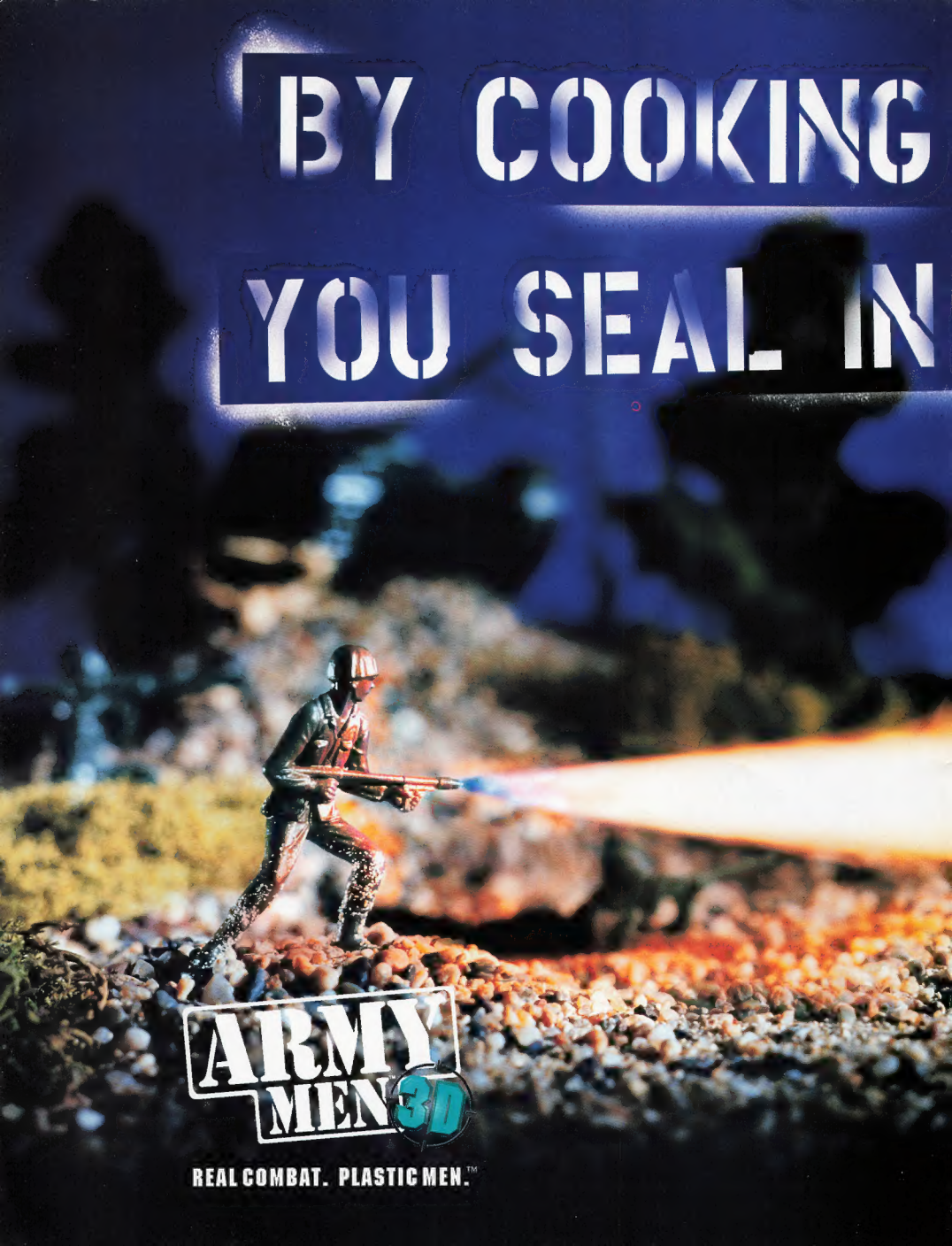
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VOLUME 4 • ISSUE 3
FEBRUARY 1999

EXmail:> p8
A forum for our intelligent and pleasant readers to voice their valuable opinions and let us make fun of them.

EXcessory:> p14
Five shiny peripherals to plug into your PlayStation. Check them out and tell us your thoughts and we'll give you a dollar (maybe).

EXnews:> p18
Real, gosh darn, almost official PlayStation 2 specs, Dreamcast launch flops, plus Todd McFarlane Metal Gear Solid figures.

EXecute:> p22
It's code time again friends. That means good cheatin'. Let's get invincible, little buddies!

EXclusive:> p26
Who needs the internet when you've got EXclusive infos like these? It's really good info for you, bub.

EXtreme:> p36
It's evil with Kain and Akuji, two dark-as-sin games from Eidos and Crystal D. That's a great cover feature, folks.

EXpecting:> p40
If you ever wanted to look at games that weren't out yet, this is the section for you.

SPorts:> p49
Another jamboree of sports excitement bundled into one solid knowledge-delivering mass. Very nice.

EXrated:> p56
If you're tired of browsing the same old smut on the net, we recommend you view these pages. Guaranteed good!

EXport:> p76
R-Type Delta and Dance, Dance, Dance. Two favorite imports of our resident game gigalo, Chris Kramer.

EXcerpt:> p78
A candid conversation with the producers of Syphon Filter.

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EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Now that '98 has come and gone (and, along with it, a ton of great PlayStation games), you would think things would slow down a bit. This couldn't be further from the truth, as the first quarter is jam-packed with great titles. No sooner did we finish playing Gran Turismo, Metal Gear Solid, Tomb Raider III, Xenogears, Spyro the Dragon and Crash Bandicoot: Warped, then we get R4, Syphon Filter, Silent Hill, Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver, Legend of Legaia, Looney Tunes and Gex 3. Throw in the imminent release of the PoketStation (and the sure-to-be-announced next generation hardware), and '99 could possibly be Sony's best yet.

And you can bet that Sony's not going to be resting on their laurels either. Have you taken a good look around lately? It's hard to walk down the block without seeing a billboard or bus go by with a PlayStation splattered on it. And on TV?... Forget about it. Just about every channel, from the major networks to the popular cable channels (Comedy Central, MTV, Nickelodeon, E! and ESPN, to name a few), is constantly showing the latest software/hardware commercials. Tell me those Crash: Warped ads aren't just as good as the originals ("Hey plumber-boy, mustache man"). It's not a difficult stretch to say, like Nintendo, that PlayStation has become a household name and just about the only console system you need to own.

It's been a difficult month for us at Dimension Publishing. There were so many cool new games that came in that it was excruciatingly tough to pull ourselves away from one to start on another. Publisher Dave went just about crazy deciding what game he should play daily. First it would be R4, and a little Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver. Next, he would move on to Akuji: the Heartless and, soon enough, he wouldn't be able to stand it anymore and would have to play Syphon Filter — everybody should have these problems. Of course, there are always the bad apples, (which I won't mention here, just turn to the Exrated section to see the ones we threw back) that make the job tough sometimes. But, it's a small sacrifice to have to play through the stinkers so you don't have to.

This issue has got some good stuff in it. There are a bunch of promising Exclusives, Dave's in-depth look at Legacy of Kain and its play mechanics, an informative Q&A session with Connie Booth, Executive Producer for 989's awesome looking and playing action/espionage thriller, Syphon Filter, and the normal amount of news, reviews and previews. Take your time, read the issue from cover-to-cover and we'll see you in roughly thirty days.

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DIMENSION PUBLISHING, INC. PRESENTS

BPA International Membership applied for May 4th, 1998

PS Extreme

PUBLISHER DAVID JON WINDING · EDITOR-IN-CHIEF GREG OFF · BIG PRODUCTION, DESIGN & LAYOUT TIM LINDQUIST · LITTLE PRODUCTION, DESIGN & LAYOUT DAVID SILVIERA
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SINGLE COPY SALES (908) 549-3448 MICHAEL A. GERARDO ASSOCIATES · DIGITAL IMAGING (818) 999-4319 IMAGITECH · E-MAIL ADDRESS D3@QUAKE.NET

PSEXTREME (ISSN# 1097-7996) is published monthly by Dimension Publishing, Inc. 1175 Chess Drive, Suite E, Foster City, CA 94404. PERIODICALS POSTAGE RATES PAID at San Mateo, CA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PSExtreme, 1175 Chess Drive, Suite E, Foster City, CA 94404. Newstand distribution is handled through Curtis Circulation Services. For customer service, write: PSExtreme Customer Service Department 1175 Chess Drive, Suite E, Foster City, CA 94404. All editorial product information should be addressed to same. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Entire contents copyright ©1998, Dimension Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. "PSExtreme" is a trade name of Dimension Publishing, Inc. Products in these pages are trade names or trademarks of their respective companies. Dimension Publishing, Inc. and PSExtreme Magazine are not affiliated with Sony Computer Entertainment of America or the companies or products contained herein. PlayStation and the PlayStation logos are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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Dear PSExtreme,

As an NCAA division I athlete, my life tends to have its way of centering around sports. As an avid game player, likewise, my game playing tends to find its way of sliding back towards the sports games. I have owned almost every major game console since the Atari (rest in peace, my friend) and have probably played every sports title (yes, even the 2600 ones). In respect to this fact, and coupled with the fact that I have played many organized sports (football, baseball, basketball, hockey and lacrosse among them), I have a high standard for the entire genre of sports games (the main reason I have yet to purchase an N64... blechhh). Among my standards, and probably the second highest behind fun factor, is realism. This is where my comment starts.

I read almost every game mag out there, and yours is one of my favorites in the way of layout and design (I'm a journalism major). I do have one major problem with your publication as of late and it stems from your December 1998 issue. In your Holiday Buyer's guide you claim that "If there is one thing EA sports does right, it's soccer." One thing? Maybe I was asleep all those years I was pounding out a season a month at NHL 95, or one a week at Madden 95, but since when has EA sports done simply one thing right? I was sickened at your rating any 989 sports game as better than EA sports.

I have purchased every GameDay game since I purchased my PlayStation three years ago. And I purchased Faceoff 99 due to your review in the December issue. What a disappointment the 98 and 99 issues of both of theses games have become. I like realism, as I said, and all I can say is that, compared to the Madden and NHL series' these are sub-par. The engine for Faceoff, as well as GameDay, is blocky and jerky, and, simply put, they are way too easy to score on. My average score on the highest level of Faceoff 99 was a 6-1 victory over a full season. My average for NHL 99? 3-2 with 12 ties (none on Faceoff) and 20 losses (eight on Faceoff). I like your magazine, but what's with the prejudice against EA sports and towards 989?

Thank you,
Jeffrey Enser

The EA Sports vs. Sony/989 subject continues to be one of much debate. Both of the companies have had a lot of success in publishing sports titles and they are very competitive. Like you, Dave and Eric are former college athletes (basketball) that have a passion for sports title and have played, and own, everything. Dave responds:

"While we understand your passion for the games, the reality is that 989 and EA offer somewhat different versions of all of the major sports. Ultimately, they are not the 'real' thing and the idea that any of these game come close to representing the intricacies of human intelligence and the details of the game(s) is ludicrous. I have enjoyed the GameDay series much more than the Madden games and have been saying so for the past few years. Eric has gone back and forth, with regard to baseball, hockey and basketball. He prefers Faceoff to NHL and really liked this year's Live. We both think MLB is a much stronger product than Triple Play — the '98 version being particularly weak. For both of us, what it boils down to is whether or not we had fun playing the game. I have found that, with Madden in particular, the EA games are aimed at the average novice who could care less about having tight control and responsive gameplay. Their customer (recognize that I am making a generalization here) seems to be more content in getting the look and feel of the sport, without having to do too much as an arcade game player and coach. A lot of people like playing Command & Conquer and plotting out strategies to be carried out by their little minions. I, however, would rather BE the minion and go face-to-face with the guy that will feel the pain that I dish out. Why sit in the stands when you can be down on the field?"

Dear PSExtreme,

First of all, I would like to say your magazine is the best and most informative magazine for the Playstation. I am a very big Spider-man fan and I was wondering if there was a Spider-man game coming out for the PlayStation?

Charlotte

Is this some kind of eerie Twilight Zone letter or something? We received your letter at the same time we got the press release announcing a new Spider-man game for PlayStation. Do you work for Activision or something?!

"Santa Monica, CA - December 2, 1998 — Marvel Comic's Spider-Man, one of the world's most recognizable and celebrated Super Heroes, will bring swift action and adventure to the Sony PlayStation and Nintendo 64 when Activision, Inc. (Nasdaq: ATVI) releases the first ever Spider-Man 3D game."

Dear PSExtreme,

Y'all know how SingleTrac (one of GT Interactive's companies) made the first two Twisted Metal games and a new company known as 989 Studios made Twisted Metal III? How come SingleTrac didn't make it? Instead, it was 989 who made it. Did ST think that 989 would do a better job or something? Does ST or, better yet, GT own 989 or something? Tell me why the fudge a different company made Twisted Metal III. One more thing. I got some news for the new Duke Nukem move. Dolph Lungdren of Rocky IV and Universal Solder is gonna play the "King of Carnage" and Larry Kasanoff, the producer of Mortal Kombat: Annhialation and Strange Days will produce. End of message.

Matthew "Iron Finger" Price
Harvey, LA

Sony owns the Twisted Metal series, no matter who makes them. They hired SingleTrac to make the first two and 989 Studios to do the third. Sony also owns 989 Studios. SingleTrac just released their own Twisted Metal-style game called Rouge Trip. Whoa.

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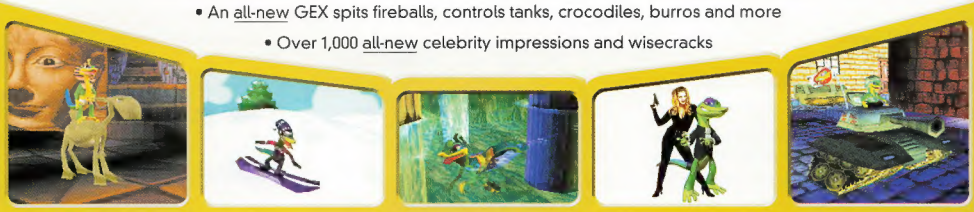

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Dear PSExtreme,

Brave Fencer Musashi: Is it worth buying or not? From the cut scenes it looks ok, but you guys have made it look bad in one issue and good in another. And obviously we all want the FF8 demo, but we have to get Brave Fencer. Is there any other way to get it?
I've heard that FF8 is coming out, early next year, but you guys say it's coming out real late next year. what's the deal with that? (and I heard the early release date from the official FF8 web site!) ???
Oh yeah, and you should make sections for game genres in PSExtreme, or something. I love RPGs, but that's just me.

Thanks for answering.
-Todd -NH

Brave Fencer is worth buying if you like RPGs. It's also the only way to check out the FFVIII demo. There is no official release date yet for FFVIII, but it will most likely show up this Spring.

Dear PSExtreme,

I've been thinking of how much I like the movie, The Rock. I was wondering if you can come out with a game about The Rock. In the game you could rescue all the hostages and stop all the bad guys before they launch the nuclear weapons on the land.
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Cyrus Mathys

We've often wondered what it would be like to make games instead of review them. Hmmmm... Nah, it's more fun reviewing them.

Dear PSExtreme,

In response to Jeff Magnussen's letter, I too have a "Buyer beware!" subject to discuss. Recently, I purchased a memory card that was made by those folks over at Nyko. For a few weeks the card worked fine but, after that, just stopped working. I lost 90+ hours of Final Fantasy 7! BUY SONY APPROVED PRODUCTS!
By the way, tell Miaka I said "hi" because I too am Asian, single, a Pisces (Feb 24) and 19 years old! I'm not worried about Shaggy cuz I'm a 1st degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do. I'll take him on any time!
Well, thanks for your time and keep up the good work on an already awesome magazine! Peace out!

Joel Mariano
Lakewood, CA

Thanks for the heads up on another unlicensed PlayStation product.
Miaka is pleased by your interest. She and Shaggy are on the outs ever since he was caught making goo-goo eyes at Zepha, the film girl. Now's your chance!

Dear PSExtreme,

Great green gobs of greasy grimy golf balls! Hey it's me again, Peter Cykana, sorry about my last letter I was getting tired of putting together book shelves. Any way I heard that Dimension films is going to produce the Final Fantasy movie.
Questions:
1. Is this true?
2. Is it true it will come out in America first?
3. Does Dimension publishing have any thing to do with Dimension films?
4. If so why don't you have more on the movie in your mag?
5. Is there any sort of any thing that stars James Bond coming out for the Play Station? I ask because my friend said so and I played 007 at my aunt's over ThanksGiving.
HERE COMES THE SUCK UP SENTENCE!
Your magazine is the best!!!!
END.

Peter Cykana

You ask some important questions that need to be answered, son.
1. No. It will be Columbia Pictures.
2. It'll be a simultaneous release.
3. No.
4. n/a
5. Tomorrow Never Dies, from EA in June or July '97 (maybe).

Dear PSExtreme,

I know how you guys love to get email from your loyal readers, picking nits about your reviews, so here goes...
You dissed Ninja: Shadow of Darkness!!!
After your cool front page teaser some months back, I really got excited about this game, and I wasn't disappointed. I'm just sorry to hear you guys were. Sure it has some control issues, and I find it hard to believe that EIDOS would release a Fall, 98 title without analog support, but its still a fun game and the graphics are absolutely gorgeous. The gameplay brings back the good old days of SHINOBI, or Sega Master System's NINJA. We need some good traditional arcade-style games like this one.
They can't all be epic, plot-driven masterpieces like METAL GEAR SOLID. Sure I loved MGS, but after beating it three times, how often am I going to replay it?
Ah, well! Until next time, I'll be eagerly awaiting the next issue.

Sincerely,
Dave Z.

We're glad you liked Ninja. It's true. We are probably spoiled by the Tomb Raiders, Spyros and Crash Bandicoots of the gaming world and therefore are harder on the Ninjas, Devil Dice and Dragon Seeds. BUT, any game that gets "Silver" is a game for fans of that type of game. That means we feel you will enjoy the game if it's your style of game... RPG, retro, platform, whatever. When we give a game Platinum or Gold, like Metal Gear Solid, that means we feel that anyone who picks up the game is going to like it, no matter what style of game is their favorite.

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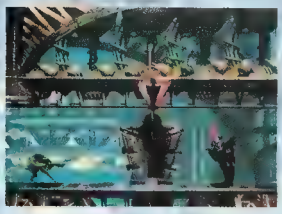

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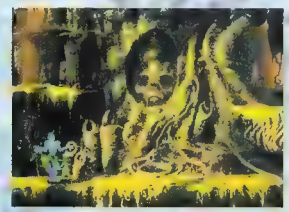

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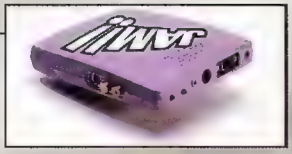

One thing computer gamers have always held over console gamers is the computer's ability to display a high resolution image on a monitor, while console gamers are limited to the television, with its inherently lower picture quality. One solution is to mod your console for RGB out, but that can be difficult, not to mention voiding the warranty. A second solution is to invest in something like Jam!!

Essentially an upscan converter, Jam!! takes a standard composite or S-Video signal as an input and outputs a SVGA signal that can drive a computer monitor. The catch, and there's always a catch, is that although it is displaying on a monitor Jam!! is still using a composite input which means it is still limited by the quality of that signal and will not be as good as a true RGB output.

Small in size, Jam!! is easy to hook up to an existing system. It ships with a pass-through cable for a computer so you can leave it connected at all times. Also included in the box is a S-Video cable for the PSX. Once the cables are connected it is as simple as turning on the unit and the PSX to make everything work.

A side benefit of Jam!! is the fact that it is not signal specific. Jam!! can handle a PAL (Europe) signal just as well as an NTSC (USA/Japan) signal. Import gamers will appreciate this.

All in all Jam!! is a great little toy, but it's not for everybody. If you already have a good sized TV with an S-Video input then there is really no reason to pick it up. However, if you are limited by space (such as living in a dorm room) or, if you only have RCA jacks on the TV, then it can be a worthwhile purchase.

GAMEICE – CONSUMER BENEFITS MSP – $39.95

Continuing on the peripherals-designed-to-get-your-crap-running again is Consumer Benefits MSP's Game Ice Cooling and Maintenance System. What, what, what? Consumer Benefits, an extremely small company based on the East Coast, wants to help hapless PlayStation owners fend off the evils of over heating. The Playstation's surprisingly fragile design has been well documented at this point in time.

Most consumers are well aware of the problems that stem from overheating because of the unit's poorly placed air vents. If you've ever left your PSX on too long, you've probably noticed the skipping that occurs during FMV sequences or that the sound isn't matching up to the game. The Game Ice is designed to help your PSX "breathe," if you will, force-feeding cool air through the bottom vents in the hopes of cutting down on the skipping problems. Does it work? To give the Game Ice its ultimate workout, I attached it to my mod chipped PSX and slapped in Bust A Groove. The game's combination of music and graphics has been enough to cause just about any PlayStation to pack it in and, on my modified unit, I've never been able to get it running smoothly without turning the entire PlayStation on its side. Surprisingly, with the Game Ice attached and blowing up a storm, Bust A Groove played with nary a sign of a glitch, pop or skip. If it can take my beat up PlayStation and make it run again, its powers are nearly magical. If your PSX is bagging out on you during FMV and audio sequences, you may want to consider picking one of these devices up. It can be ordered through the internet at:

REALITY VEST – NUBY – $69.95

*Darky editor, Headgear and gloves not included.

Nuby's Reality Vest is just the latest in a long string of bizarro game devices designed to "immerse" you in the gaming experience. The vest is designed to work like the shock portion of the Dual Analog controller. If the left side of the Dual Analog is supposed to vibrate, then the left side of the vest will jiggle and vice verse. The vibration units are powered by four AA batteries, which, of course, are not included. The first thing I noticed after strapping this thing on was "Hey, I need to lose some weight." The second was that I couldn't sit my fat jiggler all the way back in my chair, 'cause the buzzers on the flip side would dig into me. There are a few different rumble modes that you can switch the vest into. Standard mode has all the vibrating units active, Punch mode randomly vibrates across the vest, Crash mode will vibrate the front and back separately and Random mode will cycle between the three. I tried a few games, including Metal Gear Solid and Tiny Tank. With the vest in Punch mode for MGS, it felt like you were getting splattered with bullets in different areas of your body. It was definitely a weird sensation and caused me considerable surprise at first. The vest actually helped enhance the panic you feel whenever you're spotted by a guard or camera, since it causes the entire outfit to vibrate. And Tiny Tank, which normally can make a Dual Shock controller dance across a tabletop, makes you feel all tingly for a good twenty minutes or so after playing.

Yes, the Reality Vest does work and, in fact, works pretty well. However, am I really going to wear this thing whenever I play a game? The answer is; not likely. I feel ridiculous enough sometimes when I play video games and all these straps, wires and pockets don't help.

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DEX DRIVE – INTERACT – $39.99

The Dex Drive is much like the old PSX disk drive in principle, but with none of the flaws. The Dex Drive is a standalone unit that connects to your PC via a serial port. A memory card slot on the Dex Drive will accept any standard PSX memory card.

Viewing memory cards is done via the "DexPlorer" software. Looking somewhat like the Windows Explorer, the "DexPlorer" displays memory card contents in a pane on the left and save files on the PC in a pane on the right. Whole cards can be backed up or restored with a button press and individual saves can be simply dragged and dropped back and forth.

Trading save files is as simple as sending them via email or downloading them from a website. InterAct has an official website for trading saves up and running at www.dexchange.net and unofficial fan sites are already making an appearance. There should be no shortage of available saves.

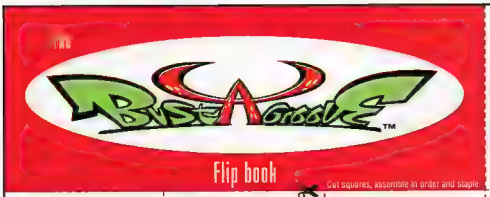
Save files on the PC have extra space available for notes. This is a nice touch because it allows you to write in short descriptions of your saves. Much nicer than the generic descriptions the PSX assigns as save names.

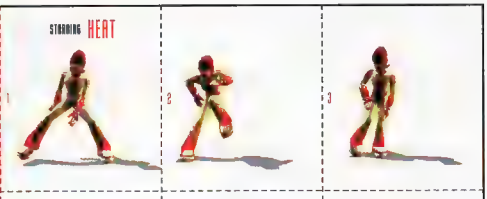
The only complaint I had about the Dex Drive was the fact that save files on the PC have to be created in 15 block chunks, the same as a real memory card. This means that a save file with one block used will take up as much space as a save file with all 15 blocks used. Of course, the save files are quite small so even this complaint is a minor one. A single floppy disk can hold nine save files for a total of 135 blocks of memory. That's plenty more than a standard memory card and much more reliable than any "mega-memory" card on the market. If there was ever a "must have" accessory for the PSX this is it.

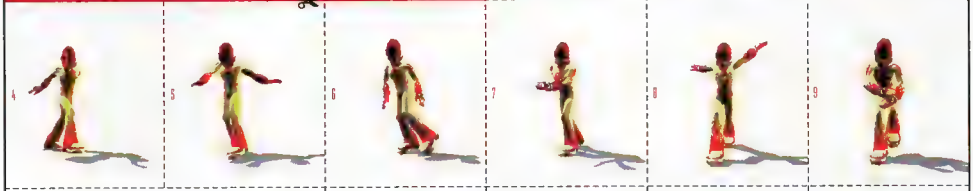
JOGCON – NAMCO – $45.00

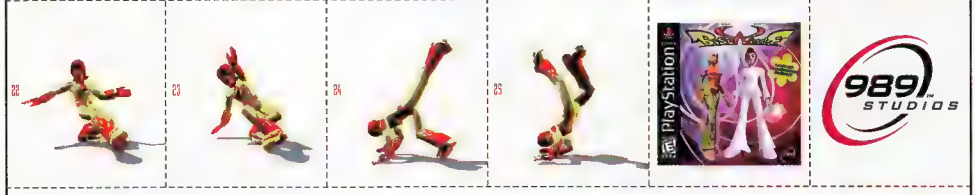
Namco, a company known for innovative hardware and software, has just dropped a bomb on the racing simulation market, the Jogcon. Released with Ridge Racer 4 (R4) in Japan, this controller will change the way you race. Unfortunately, it will only change the way you play Ridge Racer 4, as it doesn't work with any other PlayStation games, and Namco America has no plans to bring the product out in the states (the game is coming, just not the Jogcon). But, for RR fans, it is an absolute must-buy. The controller is built around a force feedback wheel that puts the Dual Shock to shame. The wheel is controlled with your left thumb (be prepared, your thumb will get a workout and you will feel things pull that you didn't know you had) and the game has options for altering the resistance of the force feedback and the throw of the wheel. When entering a turn, you will feel G-force type resistance through the wheel, where you will actually have to push harder to make the car hold its line. When coming in contact with a wall or another vehicle, you will feel varying degrees of impact and the wheel will try to spin under your thumb. It is, without question, the best use of mechanical feedback and response on any PlayStation controller and, at 45 bucks from an import shop (may we suggest Network Video: (650) 579-3636), cheap enough for racing fans to toss a few Andy's and not miss them. While smaller hands may have a little problem, it will fit most adults like a glove. If it worked with other games, it would receive Platinum... Check it out!

EXCESSORY





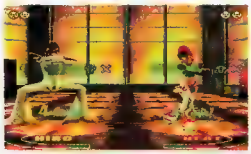


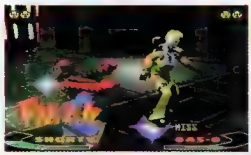


Funkin' Groovin' Dance Action!

Here's the dilly, yo... It's called Bust A Groove: The fresh, competitive dance game for a funked-up PlayStation® generation. You control more than 10 club characters as they perform their super realistic dance moves to disco, house and hip-hop beats. So get your body movin' with the game that's got the groove goin' on!

www.989studios.com





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PlayStation Gaming News

From Around The Globe

PlayStation 2 Details

While we have, to this point, stayed out of the PS2 rumor mill, we have recently come across information that is just too good to pass up, and that comes to us on good authority. The PlayStation 2 spec's, according to our source, are fairly tight at this point in time and official announcements should be made by the end of the first quarter of 1999. The PS2 will, as many have speculated, be built around a DVD drive. But the big news is that the system will push around 60 million polygons per second (at 30 frames per second)! To give you an idea of how huge this number is, consider this; 3Dfx has recently announced its Voodoo 3 technology, arguably the cutting edge of consumer 3D graphic presentation. Voodoo 3 moves 7 million PPS and is more powerful, in this regard, than Sega's recently released Dreamcast system. In addition, hardware engineers and math types believe that photo-realistic graphic presentation is possible at 80 million polygons per second. Doing the math, PS2 would be capable of achieving 75% of true, photo-real quality. We're not hardware folks, but something tells us that most of us average Joe's aren't going to notice much of a difference between 60 and 80 million. The only remaining question would be the issue of backward compatibility. With this kind of technological leap, we doubt that the system will run old PlayStation titles, but you never know...

Dreamcast A Bust

Folks, don't listen to the hype and keep enjoying your PlayStations — there is no competition on the horizon. We recently received our Dreamcasts (after coughing up a truckload of cash) and are less than impressed. The technology is basically comparable to current PC/3Dfx technology — nothing that can touch the rumored spec's above and Sega of Japan, with their penchant for bumbling and stumbling, shipped nothing but garbage software with the system. And, most of the name titles have been delayed in Japan. They sold 150,000 of them right away but, in Japan, they can sell a ton of any new technology, even if there isn't any software to run on it. Godzilla is horrible, Virtua Fighter 3 is a shadow of its arcade self and July is absolute garbage. The only saving grace was Pen Pen Tricelon — a nice looking, "Motor Toon" style racer. Anybody remember the Saturn launch in Japan? Shipped with a weak version of Virtua Fighter and nothing else, then it took forever to get a bunch of weak titles to the market, followed nine months later by an American launch? Hmmm... the similarities are quite telling... and we all know what happened to the Saturn in the US! If you follow the web sites or read other magazines, you have seen the incredible build-up that the Dreamcast received. You'll also notice that they are all pretty quiet now — hoping that the release of Sonic will save their spec'-driven hyperbole.

Psygnosis Trims Down To The Nub

Rumors have been circulating for quite some time (ever since SCEA divested itself of its interest in the company) about the future of Psygnosis' American operation — now we know. Apparently, all American product development is going to cease and the company is looking for a distribution partner to take care of shipping their goods to retail. When all is said and done, the company will have a little over a dozen full-time employees in their Foster City, California offices — all marketing and administrative types. While this may seem, on the surface, to be rather drastic, it really isn't. Psygnosis titles have been, for the most part, created in Europe for the European market — they do very well in that part of the world. They have had less success in America and very little in Japan, so the move makes sense — keep enough staff to market the products overseas, but control the creative process from the home office.

Plastic Snake

McFarlane Toys will be shipping the first of their Metal Gear Solid action figures in February. Beginning with Solid Snake, there will be eight different action figures hitting the market, including Revolver Ocelot, Liquid Snake, Psycho Mantis and others. McFarlane Toys, producers of the amazingly detailed

KISS and Spawn action figures, has built a reputation for quality work, and we can expect that the Metal Gear Solid product will follow suit.

Midway Lays Down The Gauntlet

Midway recently announced that its arcade title, Gauntlet Legends, will be coming to the PlayStation this Spring. The PlayStation version is going to feature additional characters and levels not found in the arcade game and will also contain a two player mode.

PS

EX NEWS

BEING BETRAYED BY YOUR CREATOR DOESN'T JUST MAKE FOR BAD BLOOD...

- As Raziel, stalk Nosgoth feeding on the souls of your enemies
- Engage your creator Kain, in an epic struggle for dominance
- Dark gothic story
- No load times

IT MAKES FOR BLOODSHED.

LEGACY OF KAIN
SOUL REAVER

PlayStation

T
TEEN
ESRB

PC CD ROM

www.eidos.com
www.crystald.com

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

PlayStation Gaming News

Top 10

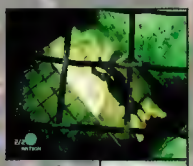
BEST SELLING PLAYSTATION TITLES RANKED ON UNIT SALES

NOVEMBER 1998

Sony's
Crash Bandicoot 3 Warped

1
last month **
average retail price
$40

Konami's
Metal Gear Solid



2
last month 1
average retail price
$47

EIDOS'
Tomb Raider 3

3
last month **
average retail price
$48

EA's
NBA Live 99

4
last month **
average retail price
$41

EA's
Nascar 99

5
last month 6
average retail price
$40

989 Studios'
Twisted Metal 3

6
last month **
average retail price
$40

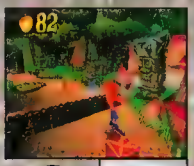
EA's
Madden NFL 99

7
last month 2
average retail price
$40

989 Studios'
NFL Gameday 99

8
last month 5
average retail price
$40

Sony's
Crash Bandicoot 2



9
last month 9
average retail price
$21

Acclaim's
WWF WarZone

10
last month 7
average retail price
$42

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Tracking Service
900 West Shore Road, Port Washington, NY 11050
(516) 625-2294

** Not in Top 10 Last Month

The ratings reflected above are those of Dimension Publishing and do not represent the opinions of NPD TRSTS.

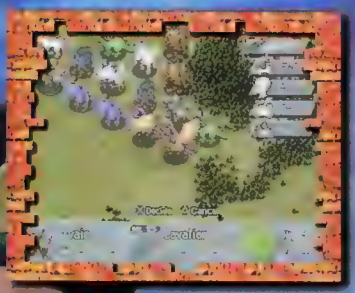
EX NEWS

From the publishers who brought you
Kartia, Persona, Ogre Battle and Tactics Ogre.

BRIGANDINE™

The Legend of Forsena

- Use over 50 monsters to aid you in your quest to unify the continent!
- 3D polygonal fight scenes enhance your perception of reality!
- Engage in massive battles to alter the course of your country's destiny!
- Enjoy over 50 hours of gameplay with each of the five characters!



EVERYONE E

PlayStation

RPG/SIM

ATLUS®

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www.atlus.com

SEND US YOUR CODES AND WIN BIG PRIZES!

Each month we'll pick the best code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a brand spankin' new copy of ASCII's hot new Drivin' Destruct-in game for the PlayStation, Armored Core: Project Phantasma or, if fighting's your thing, ASCII's SpecializedStick (you decide). But wait! That's not all: if you act now, we'll also include ASCII's super stylish ASCII Grip one-handed controller for the PlayStation, for your controlling pleasure PLUS twelve (12) free issues of the best, the first, monthly dedicated PlayStation magazine, PSExtreme, of course! Whoa! That's a lot of cool stuff for just a code: what are you waiting for?

WE HAVE A WINNER!

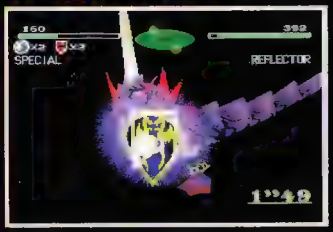
Thanks and mucho congratulatos go to Edward Fingerbeuller from Kent, VA. Edward sent us this really cool Asteroids code and he's really cool on the inside too.

ASTEROIDS

THE OLD ASTEROIDS:
You guys are the best and I want to win free games and peripherals so you should really believe me when I tell you that you are the best. Also, you are better than everyone else on top of that. I should really win with this code because it is a really cool code and you guys are cool and I think my sister likes you.
In the new Asteroids game, begin a game on mission 1 and reach level 15. Then on level 15, locate and shoot the green vector graphics asteroid that appears. If done correctly, big words in green will appear on the screen. Complete the level and save the game to keep the original version of the game unlocked.

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or ASCII Entertainment, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant. If you win but do not specify, in your code submission, which prize you want to receive (Armored Core or an ASCII SpecializedStick), then we will choose for you.

Dragonseeds



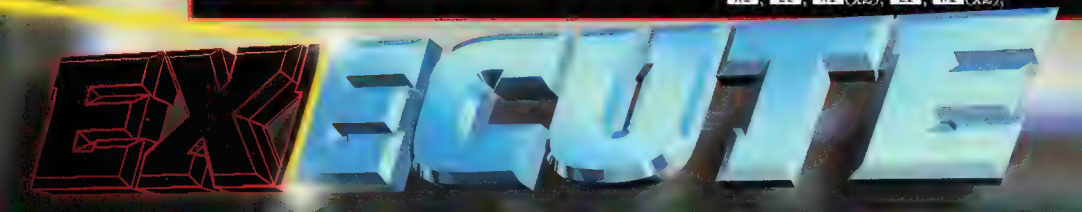
REVIVE A DRAGON KILLED IN BATTLE:
Go to the Clone Lab and you can revive the dragon if the tube where the dragon was contained is still empty (50% chnce). This does not apply if the dragon died of old age. (Invalid if you pulled out another dragon at the lab, cloned a new dragon, or captured a dragon to occupy the tube.)
IF YOU HAVE INSUFFICIENT FUNDS TO BUY WEAPONS:
Go to the junk shop and you will receive a minimum in equipment. (Invalid if you don't have a dragon with you or your dragon is cocooned.)
TO OBTAIN A RARE ITEM AT THE JUNK SHOP:
Go to the Junk Shop if Nancy at the Public Store says. "Ishuka said you should stop by." (Invalid if don't go to the Junk Shop right after leaving the Public Store.)
TO CATCH A WILD DRAGON:
If all of the conditions are met: • Memory Card in slot 2 • Bring a Senior dragon • BioBank has an empty tube. You don't need to meet these conditions if you defeat Awazanak.
TO HAVE A WDC TITLE DEFENDING MATCH:
Bring your dragon that won the WDC championship to the battle arena. Sometimes you can defend your title against other dragons.
TO RECLONE A DRAGON:
Once you raise a dragon to become a Senior, you can reclone a Spirit or Evil dragon at the Clone Lab.
ISHUKA SHOWS YOU A NEWSPAPER:
If your dragon becomes champion of Junior Division A and you bring it to the Junk Shop, Ishuka will show you a newspaper article about the tournament. (Invalid if the dragon is not with you, longer in Junior Division A, or is cocooned.)
TO GET A DISCOUNT AT THE PUBLIC STORE:
Go to the public Store right after your dragon has become a champion of an A rank. You will receive a 20% discount. (Invalid if the dragon is not with you, longer in Division A, or is cocooned.)
TO OBTAIN ANOTHER RARE ITEM AT THE JUNK SHOP:
Go to the junk shop after your dragon wins a Division A title for the second time. Ishuka will ask you to sell the trophy for 5000G. Decline four times, leave, and come back. Decline a fifth time and Ishuka will craft a rare item for you made of the same material as the trophy, Mysteria. (Invalid if the dragon is not with you, longer in Division A, or is cocooned.)
DRAGON NAMES/SPECIAL BOOSTS:
Muscle +8%: Superman
Wt. & Muscle -5%: Vader
HP -5%: Gon
Wt. & Muscle -5%: Witchblade
Special +5%: Goro
Wt., HP, Speed, Muscle & Special +8%: Ed
HP +5%: Earp
Wt. +8%: Sony
Wt., HP, Speed, Muscle & Special -8%: Sex
Unknown: Jaleco
Codes submitted by Shane Takahashi

Apocalypse

To enable cheats, pause the game and hold down the L1 button — then input the code.
Invincibility: ↑↑↑↑Ⓐ↓↓↓↓
All Weapons: ⓇⓄ↓↑ⓍⓇ
Unlock Levels: Ⓐ↓Ⓧ↑
Debug Info Cheat: ↑↑Ⓐ
Codes submitted by Julia Roether

Tomb Raider III

ALL WEAPONS, MEDKITS, FLARES AND SAVE CRYSTALS:
Quickly press L2, R2 (x8), L2 (x4), R2, L2, R2 (x2), L2, R2 (x2),



L2 (x3), L2, L2 (x2), R2 during game play. Lara will scream to confirm correct code entry.

LEVEL SKIP:
Quickly press L2, R2, L2 (x2), R2, L2, R2, L2, R2, L2 (x4), R2, L2, R2 (x4), L2 during game play. Lara will say "No" to confirm correct code entry.

ALL SECRETS:
Quickly press L2 (x5), R2, L2 (x3), R2, L2, R2, L2 (x3), R2, L2 (x2), R2, L2 (x2) during game play. Lara will say "No" to confirm correct code entry. Enabling this code will also unlock the "All Hallowed" bonus level.

RACETRACK KEY IN LARA'S MANSION:
Quickly press R2, L3 (x5), R2, L2 (x5), R2, L2 (x5), R2, L2 (x2) during game play.

FULL HEALTH:
Quickly press R2 (x2), L2, R2, L2 (x6), R2, L3 (x3), R2, L2 (x5) during game play.

FINDING LARA'S BASEMENT AND RACE COURSE KEY:
Go to the Library. When Lara walks in the doorway, there are two bookcases to the right. Approach the one on the left and press Action. Lara will pull a book and the fire will extinguish, allowing her to climb up the side wall inside the fireplace. After reaching the top, follow the passageways until reaching a room with two levels, with a switch on the top level. Pull the blocks in a way that a hallway leading into the attic is revealed. When Lara pulls the switch, the basement door will temporarily open. Quickly run through the attic, and down to the main hall to reach the basement. Once in the basement, walk through to the second room and look in the tank on the right side. Inside is the key to the race course. To collect it, pull the block in the other room to the center. Climbing up to that hall leads into the tank.

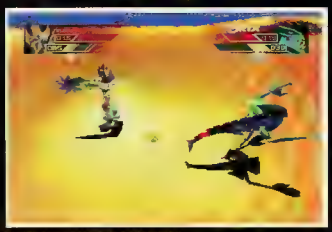
LARA'S MUSEUM:
Activate the switch on the back of the diving board in Laura's pool room. Go to the door it opens in her lobby. Pull the lever, and quickly roll. Sprint straight across her lobby and roll into her museum, barely making it in time. The Dagger of Xian among other artifacts are in her museum.

Code submitted by Sean A. Davis

Gamebreaker 99

EASTER EGGS
Pass Attack - Better passing game
Run Attack - Better running game
David Goliath - One team big/slow, the other small/fast
Mirror - ???
Equals - Teams are equal
BUILDER - Created players have high attribute ratings
BEAT DOWN - Season team has all 99's in game
SC - Win all games in simulator
BOOST - Give season team boost in simulator
CREDITS - Shows credits
Past Teams:
Ala 89 - Alabama 89
Ala 92 - Alabama 92
ASU 96 - Arizona State 96
Col 89 - Colorado 89
Fla 95 - Florida 95
Fla 96 - Florida 96
FSU 92 - Florida State 92
Miami 83 - Miami 83
Miami 85 - Miami 85
Miami 86 - Miami 86
Miami 89 - Miami 89
Miami 92 - Miami 92
Miami 94 - Miami 94
Mich 91 - Michigan 91
Neb 83 - Nebraska 83
Neb 91 - Nebraska 91
Neb 92 - Nebraska 92
Neb 93 - Nebraska 93
Neb 95 - Nebraska 95
Neb 96 - Nebraska 96
Neb 97 - Nebraska 97
ND 89 - Notre Dame 89
ND 90 - Notre Dame 90
OSU 96 - Ohio State 96
Okla 79 - Oklahoma 79
Okla 87 - Oklahoma 87
Penn 78 - Penn State 78
Penn 82 - Penn State 82
Penn 85 - Penn State 85
W Vir 88 - West Virginia 88

The Unholy War



SECRET CHARACTERS:
Highlight the "Set Teams" option on the "Mayhem" mode selection screen and press ⊙+■, Select(x4), Start(x3), ■(x2), ●, ⊙+■.

SECRET BATTLEFIELDS:
Highlight the "Accept Teams" option on the "Mayhem" mode selection screen and press ⊙+■, Select(x4), Start(x3), ■(x2), ●, ⊙+■.

ALL ONE PLAYER STRATEGY MAPS:
Highlight the "Set War" option on the "Strategy" mode selection screen and press ⊙+■, Select(x4), Start(x3), ■(x2), ●, ⊙+■.

Code submitted by Rod Rick

Send all code submissions to:
EXECUTE
Dimension Publishing
1176 Chess Drive, Suite E
Foster City, CA 94404
or email us at: [illegible]

GAME SHARK Codez

Welcome to the Game Shark section. Each month we'll list the newest and coolest codes right here for your cheating pleasure. Warning: These codes won't work without a Game Shark. For the latest codes and info, get on the internet and check www.gameshark.com, gacco.simplenet.com or www.datel.co.uk. If your code doesn't work, you may need to upgrade your Game Shark. Check your instruction manual for details. (Most of these codes are "unofficial" and may or may not work correctly at all. Use at your own risk.)

ASTEROIDS (GameShark v2.1)

Infinite Lives P1	8011013C	0005
Infinite Lives P2	80110140	0063
P1 Ship Modifer	800DF7C4	0007
P2 Ship Modifer	800DF7C8	0007
Enable Classic Asteroids	80110428	0001

Accompany Ship Modifier Code
0-Dagger
1-Sapier
2-Longsword
3-Excalibur

COLONY WARS 2: [illegible] (GameShark v2.1)

Infinite Assign Power Pts	800C4D04	0008
Infinite Shields	80045FB4	0064
Anti Shield Lsr No Overht	8012E21C	0000
Lasers Never Overheat	8012E274	0000
Seismic Lance Never Overht	8012E2CC	0000
Infinite Time	8011E400	230C
Infinite AS Missles	8012E388	0005
Infinite Plasma Missles	8012E3E0	0005
Enable Wraith Ship	8005513C	0100
Enable Diablo Ship	80055142	0001
Enable Voodoo Ship	80055146	0100

ODDWORLD 2 (GameShark v2.1)

All 300 Mudokons Saved	8007E43A	012C
Instant Possession	D007E4B0	0005
	8007E3F8	FFFF
Have Zero Casualties	8007E438	0000
Immune To Fleeches & Guns	801F3618	00B3
Always Invisible	801F3604	00A0
Extra Escapees	800B2D38	0005
No Casualties	800B4784	0000

A BUG'S LIFE (GameShark v2.1)

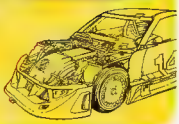
Infinite Health	800A6594	0004
Lives and 50 Grain	800A65A0	3209
FLIK	300A65A2	000F
Start with Goldberry*	800A6596	0300
Start with Blueberry*	800A6596	0100
Start with Homing Berry*	800A6596	0200
Have All Enemies Killed	800A658E	0000
Have All Movies Unlocked	80082284	000F
	8009B878	0707
	8009B87A	0707
	8009B87C	0707
	8009B87E	0707
	8009B880	0707
	8009B882	0707
	8009B884	0707
	8009B886	0707
	8009B888	0707
Have All Levels Unlocked	80082284	000F
Always Have Super Jump	800A6590	0020

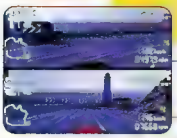
* With these codes, you can only activate one at a time!

designed by the italians.
no wonder it's attracted
to anything with curves.
namco
SOLVALOU

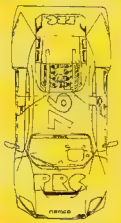
"R4 has to be the best-looking PlayStation racer ever (yes, edging out even Gran Turismo)."
- Official PlayStation Magazine, December 1998

- Sensational graphics and lighting effects give every race a cinematic feel
- Race at all times of day and night, even during dramatic sunsets
- Relive your greatest moments through the dynamic-camera replay mode
- Watch your race with all-new motion-blur effects





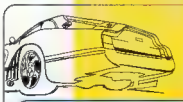
- Battle head-to-head in split-screen vs. mode



- Speed-tuned physics keep the arcade-style action fast-paced
- Championship performances unlock secret hidden supercars
- Don't be afraid to bump the other car, it's all part of a winning strategy

- Join one of four international race teams - each with individual strengths and weaknesses
- Design original logos to customize your car

- Race on gorgeous cityscape, countryside and racetrack courses



- Money can't buy victory. You've got to earn new cars with your race performance
- Experience all the ups and downs of a full racing season in the Grand Prix mode
- Includes a Ridge Racer Turbo Mode bonus disc with a 60 FPS track

It is speed incarnate. Its sexy sheet metal restrains a 3000 cc power plant that hits 0-190 mph in the snap of a linguini. It is the Bisonte - just one of the automotive marvels that scorch the streets in R4. With over 300 new cars, 45 fantastic models, 8 thrilling courses, a 2-player split-screen mode and only one way to drive. Fast. R4's asphalt gulping graphics and spectacular racing environments deliver racing speeds that were once deemed impossible. But not anymore. Now you've got R4. Ciao, baby.

R4
RIDGE RACER TYPE 4
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PlayStation

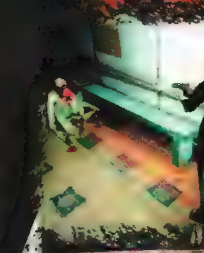
WELCOME TO HELL

SILENT HILL

Before the advent of 32-bit systems, the scariest games you could get for home consoles were titles like Konami's Castlevania or Namco's Splatterhouse (which, for all intents and purposes, just weren't that scary). Then came along the Sony PlayStation and, together with Capcom, the term "Survival Horror" was coined. There's no denying the fact that the Resident Evil series has been one of the coolest, creepiest and downright scariest games ever released for a home console, (as well as being hugely successful) and Konami, seeing the proverbial blood splattered across the wall, has decided to break into the category with their own ghoulish game. Silent Hill is the result — a 3D thriller that Konami hopes will send goosebumps rippling across your body, make the hair on the back of your neck bristle in fear, and have you afraid of the dark and sleeping with the lights on.

Not just the title of the game, Silent Hill is the setting where the horrific events will occur. An old lakeside resort town long past its prime, Silent Hill has seen better times. During these off-season days, the small town becomes a literal ghost town, with a population that dips down to the tens. Enter Harry Mason, a writer and recently widowed father who lost his wife to an illness. He has decided to come to Silent Hill with his young adolescent daughter Cheryl, for a much-postponed vacation. Plagued by car trouble, it's just about midnight when he approaches the town's outer limits, with Cheryl fast asleep in the backseat. In the game's remarkable CG intro, a police motorcycle shoots out of the night and throttles past them on the curvy, mountain road. A few miles up ahead, the motorcycle floats into view once again, this time lying on its side on the shoulder of the road. There is no sign of the rider and things just don't feel quite right. Suddenly, a mysterious figure appears out of nowhere in front of his headlights. With only a split-second to react, Harry jerks the wheel too far and too fast, sending the car spinning off the road and tumbling down into the ravine below. Blackness ensues... When Harry comes to, his daughter is nowhere to be seen, and a grip of panic and horror quickly overcomes him. Outside the car, an improbably thick fog obscures his vision, along with an abnormally cold temperature and snow that should not be falling. With only one thought in his mind — the safety and whereabouts of his only daughter — Harry ambles toward the distant and ominous shadow of the town, hoping to find some help...

Statue of an old man's hand.



While easily comparable to Capcom's Resident Evil series, Silent Hill differentiates itself in many ways. The most notable is the 3D graphic engine, which is presented in complete 3D (versus RE's pre-rendered backgrounds and pre-set camera angles). Everything in the game is comprised of polygons, creating a much more dynamic and open feeling to the game, while still making the player feel strangely claustrophobic and uneasy. One

There's some blood on some of the keys....

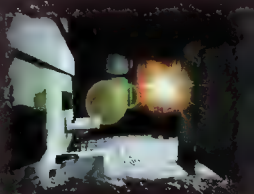
It's written in blood.

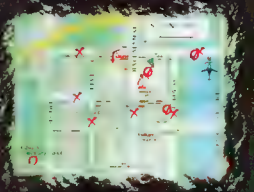
of the reasons Capcom has given in stating why they have chosen not to produce their Resident Evil titles in go-anywhere 3D is that, in doing so, it wouldn't allow them to create a cinematic-style experience. In my opinion, Konami has boldly shown that this is not true, by utilizing the camera in a variety of unique and enterprising ways. In certain instances, the camera will zoom in and out, pan, and rotate around the character in real-time, much like the instant replays found in Gran Turismo. The effect is nothing short of startling and amazing, adding a new dimension to the game. Admittedly, there is a certain amount of detail lost when everything is displayed in 3D, but Konami does a great job of keeping the quality level high. In addition to the unique camera work, Silent Hill tries much harder to scare you than Resident Evil does. Most of the game is played out in the dark of night, along pitch-black hallways or on fog-drenched streets, and your only weapon to combat the darkness is a pocket flashlight that illuminates a small patch of light around and in front of you. Luckily, you can find a little comfort in the aid of an old transistor radio that seems to be tuned into the monstrosities lurking about the alleyways, corridors and basements of the town – it will start to crackle and sputter white noise when they get in close proximity. While you can't see them, you know that a freakish knife-wielding baby might be just a few feet in front of you... or perhaps right behind you.

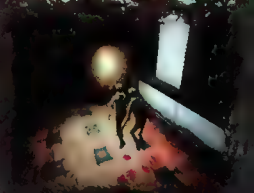
There is also an emphasis placed on realism in the game. While there are the prerequisite items such as guns, knifes, first-aid kits and ammunition, they aren't necessarily placed haphazardly throughout the game's environments. Rather, you'll find them in logical places, such as first-aid in the school's nurse's office and ammunition in a hardware store. Another example is the fact that Harry is a civilian with no special training when it comes to shooting guns. Because of this, his marksmanship is not particularly good, making shooting targets at long distances extremely difficult. Lastly, the creatures in the game have their own artificial intelligence, and will search out Harry's location using their vision and hearing. Until they perceive his presence, they won't attack, even if he is right in front of them. This means that it is possible (and recommended) to turn off the flashlight and remain still in a shadowed area until a creature passes you by, which will allow you to save on precious ammo and avoid unnecessary fighting.

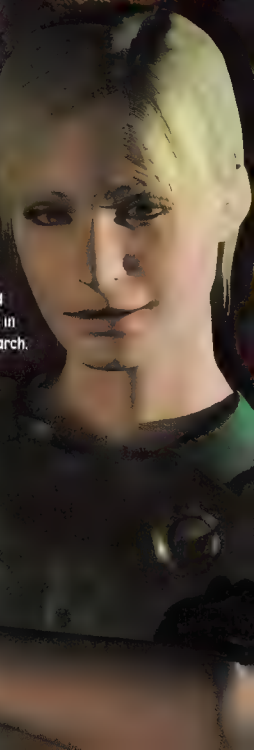
At present, Silent Hill is about 75% complete and could be yet another big hit for Konami. With a mixture of gut-wrenching graphics, a horrific atmosphere, suspenseful action, and tough puzzle solving, this could turn out to be one of the more talked-about games for early '99. With their recent success with Metal Gear Solid, and the soon to be released Castlevania 64 (for the N64, of course), Konami could be in for another banner year. We'll return with more Silent Hill coverage in the next few issues, up until its release this March.

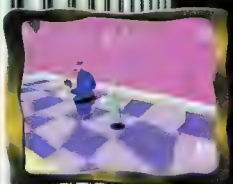
GREG

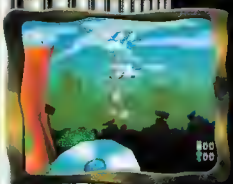


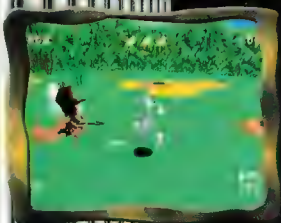


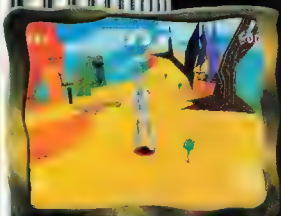


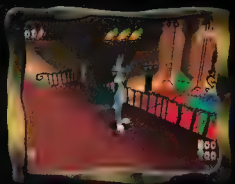


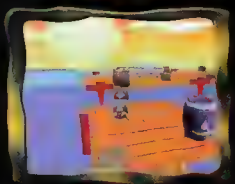












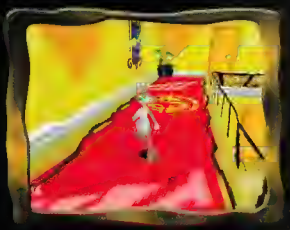
LOONEY TUNES LOST IN TIME

INFOGRAMES, IS DEFINITELY MAKING USE OF ITS LICENSING AGREEMENT WITH WARNER BROS. CURRENTLY, THEY HAVE A NUMBER OF VARIOUS LOONEY TUNE TITLES IN DEVELOPMENT, WHICH ARE SKEWED ACROSS ALL OF TODAY'S POPULAR CONSOLE PLATFORMS (FROM COLOR GAME BOY AND N64 TO THE PLAYSTATION). FOR THE PS, THERE'S LOONEY TUNES: LOST IN TIME, STARRING NONE OTHER THAN THE COOL AND COLLECTED CARROT-MUNCHER HIMSELF, BUGS BUNNY.

FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAME, INFOGRAMES TURNED TO MEGATOON STUDIOS, THE TEAM RESPONSIBLE FOR SONY'S JERSEY DEVIL. WE COULDN'T THINK OF A BETTER TEAM FOR THE JOB, AS MEGATOON CERTAINLY ARE NO STRANGERS TO PRODUCING CARTOON-STYLE GRAPHICS. JERSEY DEVIL PERFECTLY CAPTURED THAT "SATURDAY MORNING CARTOON" FEEL, AND MEGATOON IS USING AN ENHANCED AND MODIFIED VERSION OF THAT ENGINE FOR LOST IN TIME.

THE STORY FINDS BUGS, ONCE AGAIN, TAKING A WRONG TURN AT ALBUQUERQUE. THIS TIME HE ENDS UP ACCIDENTLY ACTIVATING A TIME MACHINE AND GETTING HIMSELF IN ALL SORTS OF TROUBLE THROUGHOUT TIME. BUGS WANTS ONLY TO GO HOME, BUT A VARIETY OF WACKY TOON VILLAINS, SPANNING MORE THAN FIVE ERAS OF TIME, ARE COMMITTED TO HUNTING THE "WASCALLY WABBIT" AND PREVENTING HIM FROM RETURNING TO THE LITTLE COZY HOLE HE CALLS HOME. AS BUGS BUNNY, PLAYERS WILL HAVE TO FOIL THE DEVIOUS PLANS OF A VARIETY OF BUMBLING SCOUNDRELS, INCLUDING THE

EXCLUSIVE

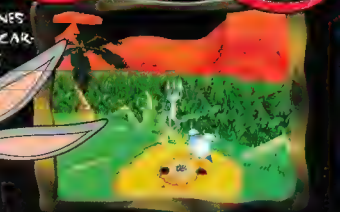


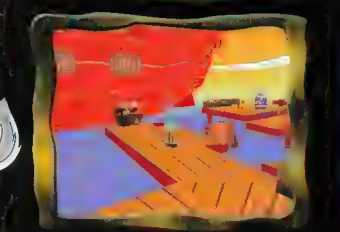
likes of Elmer Fudd, Hazel Witch, Yosemite Sam, Rocky and Mugsy, and everyBody's favorite extra-terrestrial, Marvin the Martian.

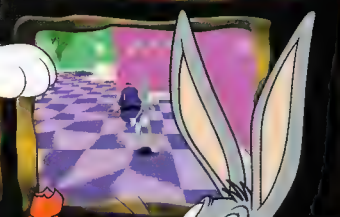
In the game, players will have to defeat or escape each toon they run into, while surviving a host of wild antics along the way. Besides the prerequisite butt-bouncing and collecting items (carrots, tokens and valuable blue ribBons), Bugs is going to have to do some crafty moves, which include solving puzzles and unlocking secrets to continue the journey.

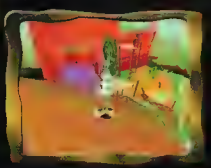
Looney Tunes: Lost in Time has a laundry list of features that the developers are currently implementing into the game. When it's all said and done (the game will be available this spring), you can expect 24 levels of 3D, non-linear, go-anywhere gameplay (which include five basic areas you'll most likely recognize from some of your favorite episodes – Stone Age, Medieval, Pirates, Gangsters and the intergalactic future). There will also be four bonus levels, featuring cameos from other Warner Bros. characters, such as Daffy the Duck and the Bull; real-time 3D animated cut-scenes which will introduce the action and link each new adventure; original music and CD stereo sound effects from the Warner Bros. Looney Tunes archives; special lighting effects, vibrant cartoon-style graphics and detailed animation; and, much like today's more popular platformers, a user-friendly camera which can be rotated around 360 degrees.

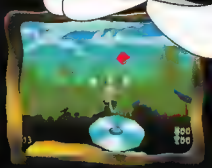
Looney Tunes: Lost in Time should appeal to both adults and kids. The game will offer a solid challenge while retaining the humor and wackiness that have made the cartoons so timeless and endearing. With one toon-style title already under their belts, Mega-Toon, along with Infogrames have a very cool game and potential hit on their hands. Expect plenty more coverage on the game as it gets closer to its release in April.

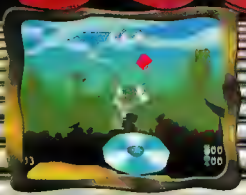


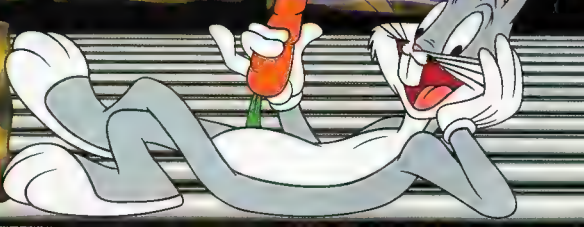






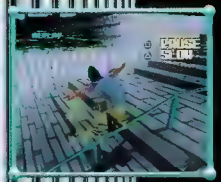


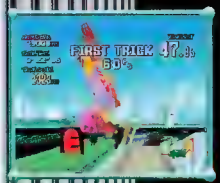


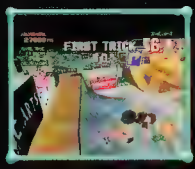


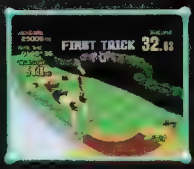
OREO

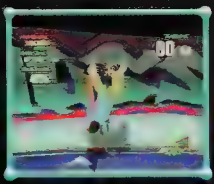
STREET SK8ER™











Cops getting you down? Is The Man chasing you off the curbs and rails of your local school, parking lot, empty pool or mini mall? Don't let society get you down, bro. Instead of getting harassed, busted or pepper sprayed, retreat to the relative saftey of your PlayStation, where you can pull all the frontside grinds, allies, 720s and McTwists you want, without fear of adult reprisals or broken bones. EA's just decided to pick up Street Sk8er, a Japanese produced skateboard title from a little company called Micro Cabin.

Street Sk8er captures a bit of the feel of skateboarding games from the past (California Games and 720, anyone?), while bringing the sport/lifestyle/misdemeanor into a modern 3D setting. The game is set within a variety of different skateparks, with bowls, ramps, half pipes stairs and rails to thrash on.

There are a bunch of different skaters to choose from (four to begin with and another four hidden), each with his or her own signature moves. Moves are pulled off by skating towards an object — ramp, wall or rail — and jumping onto or off of it with the X button. As you jump, pushing the D-pad and pressing one of the buttons will make your skater bust a move in the air. Getting the timing right is as important as which move you pull, since the higher you jump, the better your score. Finish a stage within the Street Tour and you're given points to upgrade your stats, adding to your totals for speed, jumping, cornering and acceleration. Your Stunt Level will also bump up as you progress, opening up newer, fancier moves.

Initially, only Stage 1 is open for competition. You've got to enter the Street Tour and score major points in order to unlock the next stage. You're awarded points based on the amount of tricks you pull off, as well as for complexity. Grab enough points and the next stage opens up for both the Tour and for Free Skate mode.

You've got to keep moving though, as the clock is running fast. There are checkpoints spaced throughout the stages that drop you some bonus time, but slam too often and you're going to have to rip the course all over again (same goes for not scoring enough points).

Impressed with the stunts you just pulled? Go back and watch again in Replay mode, so you can eyeball your rippin fakies and 180 spins. The Replay follows your last run from dynamic camera angles that put the X Games to shame. Slow the action down and you may be able to learn a few moves to apply in real life.

Skating is all about the collision of sport, style and music, so no skateboarding game would be complete without a raging soundtrack. EA has nailed down some punk rock from Epitaph and Capitol Records. Curiously, there's no Bad Religion or Rancid tunes in offering, even though they're Epitaph's breadwinners. Instead, we've there are cuts from The Pietasters, I Against I, Gas Huffer, Less Than Jake, Weston and a few other new bands.

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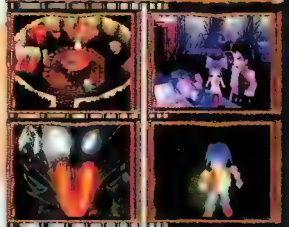
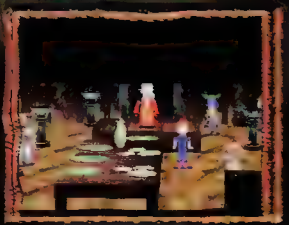
Legend of LEGAIA

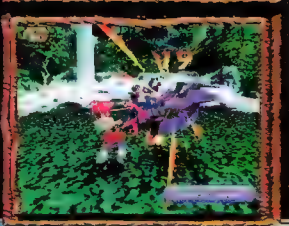


PlayStation owners who happen to be RPG fans are a lucky bunch. Historically, Sony has been one of the few hardware/software companies that have listened to the needs and wants of their consumer and have encouraged third party publishers and developers to produce role playing games for the system. '97 and '98 saw the release of some amazing RPGs — especially from the talented developers at Square — but also including a few from within their own ranks at SCEJ (Sony Computer Entertainment of Japan). One of these titles was Wild Arms, a 2D/3D hybrid that incorporated all of the ingredients for a great RPG (an involving story, multiple quests, detailed characters, puzzle solving and a great battle system). While not as technically advanced as Square's FFVII, Wild Arms managed to retain the flavor of 16-bit RPGs of the past, while incorporating some new ideas and technology. The reason for mentioning Wild Arms in this article, is Sony's next and newest RPG to be released, "Legend of Legaia", which is being produced and partly developed by the same people responsible for the aforementioned title.

While Legend of Legaia is being produced by Takahiro Kaneko, the same producer of Wild Arms, there is no tie-in between the two games. Each is a separate story that takes place in a different world, time and universe, but the level of quality from one game to the next is very evident. The storyline of the game revolves around a strange mist that has blanketed the world of Legaia, a once rich and prosperous land. The mysterious and evil mist has brought madness, rage and death to whatever it comes in contact with. To survive, the people and the Seru, a living organism that lives with and often serves man, take to the highlands, underground and along the ocean in order to avoid the strange plague. But the mist is spreading and turning the Seru into killers who are now attacking the last outposts of civilization.

In the seaside village of Rim Elm, a miracle occurred.





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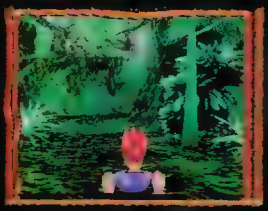
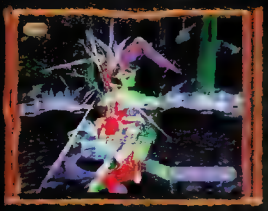


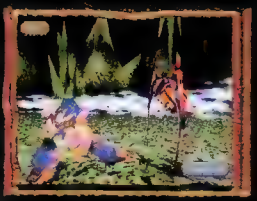


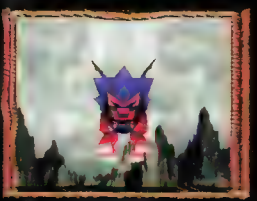
A Ra-Seru (a mystical being) appears to a young villager named Vahn, and together they revive the large Genesis Tree at the center of the village (all of this takes place in the first half-hour of the game). The true significance of the Genesis Tree had remained a mystery, but, with this incredible healing, it grew and completely dispersed the deadly mist from the area. Now, with the knowledge of what it takes to rid Legaia of the mist once and for all, Vahn and his Ra-Seru must set out on an epic quest across the dark and dangerous countryside in an effort to save the remaining Genesis Trees.

Legend of Legaia remains true to the standard RPG formula created by such classics as the Dragon Quest and Final Fantasy series, while showing off new and innovative technology. In addition to wandering around countrysides, fighting random battles, delving deep into complex dungeons and talking with the local villagers for clues on where to go next, the game features a totally 3D world where graphics, game play and story telling are presented in a complete 3D polygonal design. Legaia also features a new and very cool combat system, with a look and style that reflects today's popular 3D fighters. This system has been termed "Tactical Arts System" and is based on fighting games rather than the typical "hit the attack button and hope to do some damage." While the battles are still a turn-based affair, players will choose from a variety of moves through a simple command system, in turn creating combos and uncovering special attacks which can be learned and then stored in an on-screen move list for later use. All of this is shown off in 3D, with huge polygonal characters and gorgeous special effects. Speaking of graphics, Legaia has been crafted with the intent of delivering a dramatic, cinematic experience. Dynamic camera work has been used to present scenes from various angles to bring the best out in every scene.

As it stands, Legend of Legaia is set to launch in March and will certainly get the royal treatment from Sony. We will return next month with a more in-depth look at the game, its strong storyline and characters, and innovative combat system.

GREG



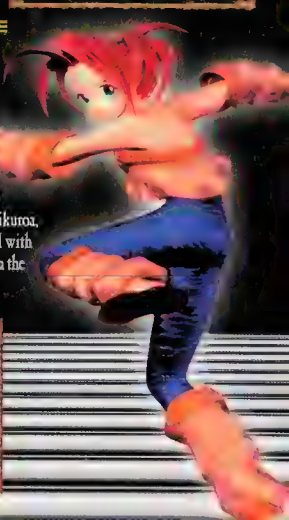


VAHN:

The central hero of the adventure, he comes from the village of Rim Elm on the coast. His journey begins at the time of the Awakening at the withering Genesis Tree when the Ra-Ser named Meta appeared to him. After dispersing the deadly mist surrounding his village, Vahn sets out to find and restore all of the Genesis Trees throughout Legaia and rid the world of the mist once and for all. Meta now exists with Vahn by way of a mythical armlet that is attached to Vahn's right arm.

NOA:

She has no real recollection of her childhood and is haunted by strange dreams. Her first memory is of the wild wolf that took her in and raised her. The wolf coexists with the Ra-Seru named Terra. While Noa has spent her life relatively alone in the caves of Rikuroa, her life is destined to become entangled with Vahn's. Noa will eventually meet Vahn on the summit of Rikroa and join his quest.



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Legacy of Kain

Soul Reaver

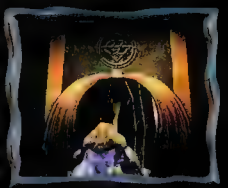
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver is a game that we've been telling you about for quite some time. So far, we've been able to run around the game environments, but the game really hasn't been that playable.

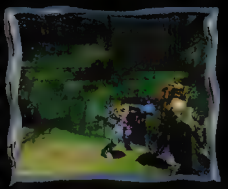
In preparing for this cover feature, we decided to take a different approach and give you a preview of what the gameplay mechanics will be all about, in addition to the latest screens – showing off the progress on this breakthrough title, both in the Material and Spectral worlds. But, before we get to the play mechanics, we'll take a look at this latest build and make a few comments on the various stages of the game.

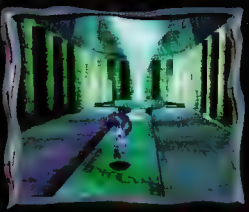
At this point in time, the transformation from the Material to the Spectral world is working very well. as an example, in the first level of the game, there are a series of objects that Raziel must jump and climb onto, to get to the top of the area. He can not continue up unless, in two different jumps, he makes the switch between worlds, thus morphing shapes and textures and changing the strategy for climbing the tower.

While the design team has just begun populating the worlds, we have been able to try out Raziel's attack on some vampires. Basically, you must make three successive swipes (with your claws) at the bad guys, then use the triangle button to apply the fatal blow. If you don't use the fatal blow, the vampires will be stunned, but they will continue to come back to life. In addition, if you have the staff, torch, etc., it takes two swipes before the vampire is stunned and you have the ability to finish him and do some soul sucking.

Lastly, as we have mentioned in previous coverage of the game, the worlds and levels, both in the Material and Spectral planes, are







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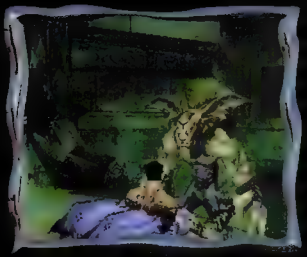
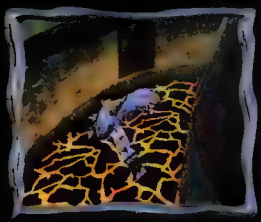
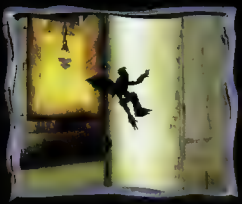






beautiful and quite unlike anything you've seen in a video game. The artists have drawn their inspiration from the cultural, architectural and artistic movements in Germany, in the early part of this century, giving the game a look that is part Fritz Lang's "Metropolis," and part Batman — where the environments at once seem almost Gothic AND futuristic. When meshed with the other-worldly feel of the Spectral tile set, the look of the game is completely unique, with an environment that defies time and place.

OK, so much for the art history lesson... let's take a look at what Raziel can actually DO within the museum-quality world that is Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver, straight from the Soul Reaver team.

ABILITIES:

Raziel gains abilities through out the game by defeating his brother vampire lieutenants, and fighting Kain. All of these abilities will be used against Raziel before he receives them.

Spectral Shifting:

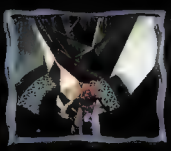
Allows Raziel to shift between the planes at any time. This skill must be learned otherwise Raziel must find a portal to get back to the Material Plane.

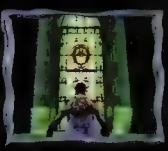
Pass Through Barriers:

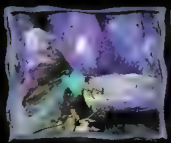
This skill allows Raziel to phase though gates to reach new areas.

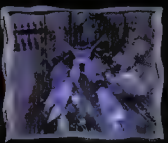
Scale Walls:

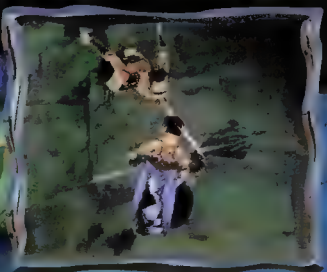
Allows Raziel to climb walls to new areas.

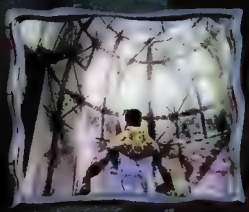


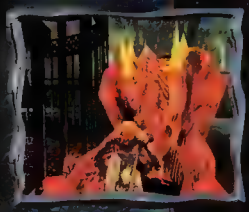


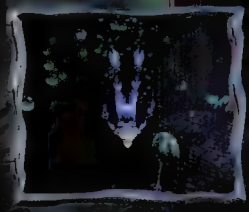












Force:

Allows Raziel to move a object from a distance – important for puzzle solving.

Amplified Force:

A second version of Force that is more destructive than the first.

Swimming:

Raziel can swim and also shift between planes while so doing.

Constrict:

This ability allows Raziel to run around objects and enemies and cause a force that will turn dials and crush enemies in its center.

Possess:

Possess the body of an enemy. This is used to force enemies to solve puzzles for you, and to kill off particularly difficult baddies.

Soul Reaver:

The legendary sword of Kain. It is destroyed in one of your confrontations with Kain. It, however, can be reclaimed in the Spectral Plane and Raziel gains the ability to summon the Soul Reaver back to the Material Plane with all new powers that come with it.

Forges:

The Soul Reaver can take on the abilities of the elements by bathing the weapon in an elemental forge; Sunlight, Water, Stone, Fire, Sound and Spirit. By adding these elements to the Soul Reaver, it becomes an even more destructive force.

Glyphs:

Raziel also gets spells (Glyphs) to use by solving puzzles in special areas. These spells are most often area effective using an element as its basis.

Sunlight:

This glyph causes all the enemies in the area to be blinded and thus stuns them so they can be impaled, or killed in one way or another.

Water:

This stuns water vulnerable enemies so they can be destroyed.

Fire:

Causes the enemies in the area to burst into flames and die a painful horrible death. This has a smaller area of effect.

Stone:

By utilizing this Glyph enemies are stunned. This spell has a wide area of effect, as it can knock wall Crawlers from the walls and ceilings, where they are waiting to attack Raziel.

Spirit:

All of the souls of the enemies in the area fly into Raziel's body. Think: "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

Sound:

This spell emits a sound only vampires can hear. When they hear it, they grab there heads in agony, then pop like zits.

Force:

When this Glyph is used, all the objects that can be picked up will rise from there spots and fly into the enemies on screen, impaling, lighting them on fire and, in general, wreaking havoc.

And that's what we know for now. Soul Reaver is still scheduled for a March release, but we wouldn't be surprised if it slips a little. This is a big game for Eidos and Crystal Dynamics and you can bet that it won't hit the street until everything is as it should be. We'll keep you posted.

Dave

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ARMY MEN 3D

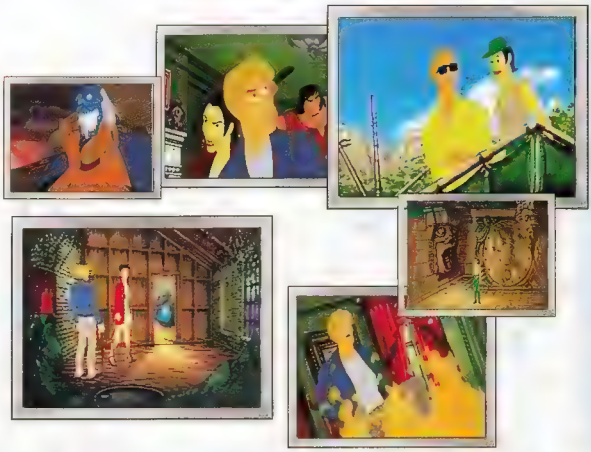
3DO • MARCH

Snow ain't gonna be the only thing melting next year as 3DO's Army Men 3D invasion will have Sarge mowin' down tan soldiers left and right with his trusty ol' flame thrower. AM3D is based on the classic army men battles we all used to stage as kids with the little plastic guys. Players get to take charge of Sarge and the green plastic army as they try to defeat the evil-doings of the tan soldiers. Missions range from rescuing captured comrades to foiling tan's plans. A ton of power-ups will be scattered throughout the levels and there seems to be a nice variety of weapons. For instance, the bazooka will blow a tan soldier into about 60 zillion pieces (the flame thrower also looks to be cool, or should we say HOT...Don't you love the smell of burnt plastic in the morning?). There are about 18 or so missions that take place in 3 different levels — alpine, bayou, and desert. The game is looking very promising right now, pretty graphics running in PSX hi-res mode, and full Dual Shock support will ensure a next generation PlayStation game. A firing camera has just been implemented which switches to an over-the-shoulder view when Sarge is unloading rounds on the opposition. There will also be a two player mode that will allow players to square off against one another in classic split screen fight-to-the-death battles. Be sure to look for full coverage on 3DO's plastic men during the next couple months.

BROKEN SWORD 2

THQ • MARCH

The original Broken Sword shipped a few years back for the PlayStation and is one of the few "point and click" adventure games to ever be released for the 32-bit console. Because of its surprising success, THQ decided to release the sequel this March (which has been available in the UK for some time now). Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror features beautifully hand-drawn 2D animation, professional voice acting, an original music score performed by a symphonic orchestra and a unique and immersive story that spans the globe. If you played the first, you'll recognize the lead characters, the lovable yet clumsy George Stobbart and nubile Nico Collard, who make a return appearance. George and Nico stumble upon a conspiracy involving some very valuable Mayan stones which posess mystical powers, and inadvertently set out on a quest to collect them all before they fall into the hands of the wrong people. The game features over 50 characters with to interact, a host of brain-busting puzzles to solve, a well-written script and storyline, a refined user-interface, and top-notch animation.



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GUARDIAN'S CRUSADE

ACTIVISION • MARCH

Activision's Guardian's Crusade, a recent acquisition from Japan (where it went under the name of Knight and Baby) is an action/RPG that puts the player in the role of a young knight who must travel through a fantastic world to discover the strange origin of a baby monster. Accidently stumbling across this monster, you must protect and guide it to the mysterious Tower of God, on the other side of the world, while traversing dozens of cities, villages, castles, towers, caves, dungeons and even an ocean. Along the way, you will discover the true nature and size of the quest, as well as many secrets about both the baby monster and the mystical world. One of the most notable features of Guardian's Crusade is the fact that it is easy to learn, yet still challenging. The game has been developed with a wide audience in mind, making it accessible to both hard-core RPG gamers, and first-time consumers. In addition, the game offers a unique character development system — players determine the monster's abilities and personality growth based on their interactions with it; a variety of magical spells and Living Toys — 71 spells and a back up of Toys that you find along your quest which will aid you in battle; a wide array of character and enemies to interact with; and rich, colorful 3D polygonal graphics.

DRIVER

RELECTIONS/TBA • 1ST QUARTER

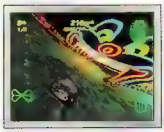
While not necessarily a racing game, Driver is more a car-chase simulation, capturing the essence of the classic car chases seen in action films such as Steve McQueen's famous chase through the streets of San Francisco in Bullit. The game is actually set in the '70's, using a variety of hot rods and muscle cars versus today's modern vehicles, and sports a very gritty, urban look. The graphic engine is set up so the player isn't restricted to a preset track and can go just about anywhere a car can go in real life (including sidewalks, back alleys and down embankments), and is set in a variety of "themed" environments from different metropolitan locations; such as San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles and Miami. The car physics have been paid particular attention, with complex collision detection and realistic reaction to the environmental hazards. In addition to the thrill of chasing another car through alleyways, slamming through garbage and litter and possibly mowing down a pedestrian or two, Driver will have a detailed replay system where you can set up your own cameras and record a cinema-style chase. There is no official publisher for the game as yet, although an announcement is forthcoming.

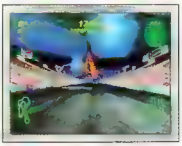
EXPECTING

JEFF GORDEN RACING

ASC • APRIL

Here's the setup: In the year 2012, modern technology has advanced and ultimately changed the face of racing. Cars now reach speeds of 300 mph on steep banks and loop turns that challenge drivers every second. In order to succeed, players must rely on their skill, break-neck decision making and assistance from racing veteran Jeff Gordon. However, in order to experience the true thrill of victory, players must face the ultimate racing challenge... competing against Jeff Gordon himself — one-on-one. This is the premise for ASC Games newest title, Jeff Gordon XS Racing. Rather than take the standard NASCAR licensing route, ASC, along with Gordon, have decided to take their racer in a different direction. Players will find themselves strapped in to one of a variety of futuristic stock-car vehicles and burn mass rubber on a host of gravity defying tracks that are littered with loops, jumps, banks and other assorted, death-defying hazards. To make things interesting, Jeff will be racing by your side, first as a mentor, giving the player advice on how to handle each track, then ultimately as an adversary. The game features great graphics, a fast engine, realistic physics and two player simultaneous split-screen racing. The game is currently expected to ship in April.





RAMPAGE UNIVERSAL TOUR

MIDWAY • FEBRUARY

Rampage is another title that, while not as old as some of the other retro-classics, has its roots in the arcades back in the late '80's. Last year saw the release of their 32-bit sequel, Rampage: World Tour, which was released and met with moderate success for both the PlayStation and N64. The PlayStation follow-up, Rampage: Universal Tour, is scheduled for a first quarter release and features more of the same classic city-stomping action that has made this series so popular. Upon completion, the game will feature four new monsters to control and over 125 levels to crush, bash and smash to the ground while feasting on the local population to keep your energy up. In addition, Universal Tour adds more on-screen enemies and individual character-specific "special moves", as well as three-player simultaneous play (via the multi-tap) to the mix. While still decidedly 2D, Rampage sports vibrantly colorful, carttoony graphics, retaining the look and flavor of the original. This game is one of those titles that is great for a quick fix, if you're in the mood for a little video game destruction before dinner or hitting the books. At this time, there is no exact release date, but the game should show up by February/March.

ROLLCAGE

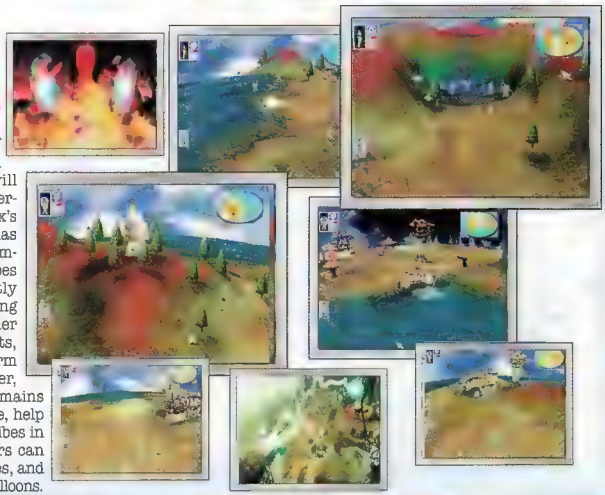
PSYGNOSIS • MARCH

Although we previewed Psygnosis' Rollcage last issue, we decided to show a few more screen shots and give more information on the title now that we've had our hands on it for some time. This futuristic 3D racer is being developed by ATD (Cybermorph, Blast Chamber) and adds a few new elements to a reasonably overcrowded genre. In the game, players will have the ability to choose from six armed and indestructible vehicles. The goal is pure and simple: race to the finish and place first. What's unique is the method you take to achieve it. Rollcage allows, no, REWARDS players for plowing through and destructing track-side environments, such as buildings, landscape and obstacles. By strategically knocking down the various objects in the environment when there's an opponent behind you, you can seriously impede their progress, as well as send them flying in the air with the shockwave you create from the destruction. In addition, your vehicle can drive up walls and along ceilings adding a 360 degree element to the game not found in others. Some of the other features include two-player and head-to-head split-screen racing, 11 different tracks and four distinct racing environments, brilliant graphics, including particle effects, huge explosions and real-time lighting, licensed music from Fatboy Slim and other Big Beat and Techno artists, and an assortment of deadly and destructive weapons.

POPULOUS

EA • APRIL

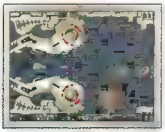
The New Beginning, the subtitle of the newest Populous game is quite appropriate, considering that the series creator and founder of Bullfrog Studios, Peter Molyneaux, has left and moved on to start a new operation. Many of Molyneaux's signature titles, including Populous, will be getting sequelized without his assistance. How will that affect the game? We won't know until the final version ships but, from the early build we received, Molyneaux's departure has not had much of an adverse effect. 3D has been a big help to the game. Twisting and turning the camera views through 360 degrees across the large landscapes has never been smoother, not to mention the greatly increased level of detail now possible. While the moving sprites are still 2D, the huts, towers, temples and other assorted building are true 3D objects. Great spell effects, such as land bridges, earthquakes and volcanoes, deform the landscape. The new Populous world has a smoother, more realistic feel than ever before. The gameplay remains essentially unchanged. You are god. Protect your people, help them grow, then convert, smash or overrun the other tribes in your area. With your guidance, your ignorant warriors can become warriors, priests and spies, and learn to build towers, boats and balloons.

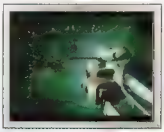


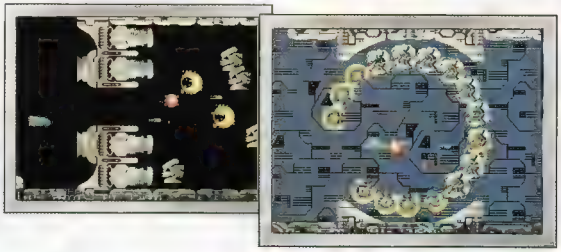
R•TYPES

ASCII ENTERTAINMENT • FEBRUARY

Irem's popular R-Type series has been a shooter staple since the first debuted in the arcades back in 1987. Since then, there have been quite a few R-Type titles released for a variety of home consoles. ASCII's R-Types is basically pixel-for-pixel emulations of the two arcade releases, R-Type and R-Type II, with a few extra goodies thrown in for good measure. If you're not familiar with, or have never had the frustrating pleasure of playing an R-Type shooter, here's the deal: the game straps you into the cockpit of a R9 spaceship that can either rapidly fire its shots, or can be charged up to fire an immensely powerful beam. Along the way, the R9 will acquire power-ups and shields that allow for more fire-power and different strategies. There is also a gun attachment that can be sent out to shoot on its own, either in front of or behind your ship, or can attach itself to the R9 for even more-powerful fire-power. In addition to the two games on one CD, R-Types offers a special History Mode, where you can look at high-res images of the different ships and enemies while learning about their capabilities, as well as a historical timeline. R-Types is Dual Shock compatible and will be priced at under forty bucks.



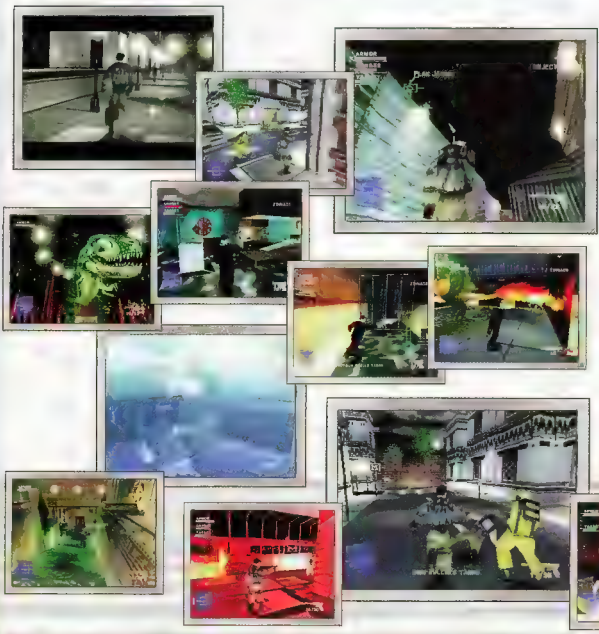




SYPHON FILTER

989 STUDIOS • FEBRUARY

Hello PSExtreme faithful, Dave here... hold on to your martinis because 989 Studios has THE game for the Bond, James Bond in all of us. Syphon Filter, featured in our EXClusive section last month, is a completely amazing game. Yes, this is a preview, but the game is so complete and so engrossing that both Greg and I have been playing it for a number of hours over the past few weeks. Gabriel Logan... remember the name — this character is so cool and his voice so perfect that he could become the next great video game star. Syphon Filter is the code name of the biological weapon that a group of Russian terrorists have gotten their hands on and they are holding the world hostage. The adventure takes you and Gabe, and his assistant, Lian, around the globe — in search of the weapon and uncovering the complex, intriguing plot as you go. The gameplay is an excellent mixture of shooting, stealth, puzzle solving and strategy that comes together to make one of the most compelling game experiences you will ever play. How about this for AI? There is not one enemy in the game that you can take lightly (and there are hundreds of them) — each needs to be dealt with on an individual basis. Kill one with a loud weapon and another guy around the corner will sound the general alarm. Drop one in front of a search light and you're busted. Trust me, when this one comes out, you will find yourself on the edge of your seat from beginning to end... the story and gameplay are that good.



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PlayStation

TEEN T

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989 STUDIOS

PlayStation

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PS Extreme SPORTS

EDITORIAL

Last month, the NBA and its players gave me plenty of fuel for my editorial. This month, it's Major League Baseball and its sorry situation. Let me be the sporting prophet, friends, you are witnessing the beginning of the end!

In case you haven't been paying attention, the disparity between the have's and the have-not's is getting past the breaking point. The Dodgers sign Kevin Brown for $100 million +, or about $15 mil a year for seven years. Quick, does anybody in Oakland, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, Milwaukee or Detroit, know that their ENTIRE team payroll is $15-20 million a year? Does anybody in any of these towns think their teams are actually going to be competitive? Ok, I said last month that the NBA could stand to lose 6-8 teams (and be much better off in the process), and I think the same rule applies for baseball. But, you know what, it's not just the difference between the top spending teams and the teams at the bottom of the scale that is bothersome, just look at all of the teams in the MIDDLE. The Giants will have a payroll of about $45 million this year (that's about the average for MLB). The Dodgers will have a payroll twice that, as will the Diamondbacks, Mets, Braves, Yankees, Angels, and Orioles. Basically, you have about 7-8 teams battling it out for the pennants and the World Series, and the other twenty teams are just there to entertain us. But, what I'd like to know is how, many of you are more interested in spending your money on entertainment than on competitive professional sports? I guess all I have to do is look at the attendance figures for the small market teams to get an idea – and since I already have, I'll tell you that it's about 8,000 per game. That's not a good number, unless you're a WNBA franchise or an MLS team. The sad part is that you hear the owners say; "We've got to increase the attendance or we'll be forced to move to another city." Guess what, Chuck? Ain't nobody in the next town going to pay to see a bunch of chumps lose a hundred games, either! The bottom line is that you've got to give your fans hope that they have a chance at winning and, without that hope, they won't come at all. And, as time marches on, and the disparity between teams gets wider than the Grand Canyon, more and more teams are going to fall into that abyss and never be heard from again.

Fortunately for us (the fans of video games), we can spend our entertainment money on good games! And, as most of you know, there is no shortage of good games right now. I've been able to spend the Christmas break catching up on games that I missed during the year; Metal Gear Solid, Medievil, Colony Wars: Vengeance, and Tenchu. Of course, I've also been playing a ton of Test Drive 5, NBA Live 99, NFL GameDay 99, and I'm still trying to finish off all of the teams in NFL Blitz! Here's hoping that your 1999 is your best year yet!

Eric

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DEVELOPED BY VICTOR INTERACTIVE
PUBLISHED BY SCEA
WRITTEN BY ERIC

CONTENDER

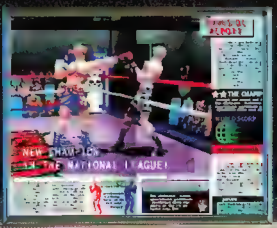
Last month we (and, more precisely, me) reviewed Knockout Kings from EA Sports. After more than three years, the PlayStation received its first boxing title. Well, no less than a month later we (uh, me) are reviewing the PlayStation's second boxing title – Contender. Contender comes to us via Sony, and Japanese developer Victor Interactive. Victor has been making the best selling boxing titles in Japan (on different systems) for a few years now.

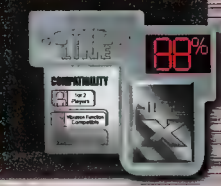
For those of you that remember Punch Out! for the NES, Contender delivers a similar feel in gameplay and attitude. The game has a definite arcade look to it, and the different fighters all have that same kind of goofy, yet intimidating, type of presence. Sony did a nice job of giving the characters a lot of personality in their respective biographies. For instance, before you fight your next opponent, you'll get a profile on the fighter that includes their four different strength meters (life, power, speed, and endurance), as well as a short paragraph explaining their particular strengths and weaknesses. You'll find out if they prefer body shots to head shots, if they've got a particularly long reach, and if they can last more than a couple of rounds. Contender features over twenty different boxers, and they all have their own unique personalities, and interesting fighting styles to boot! There are even a half dozen female fighters and, in fact, the number 2 ranked boxer is "Big Momma" Bates, and she packs a wallop! The fighters have various styles of dress to match their personality, although none as bizarre as some of the outfits in Punch Out!

Contender plays like an arcade game, with a bit of simulation thrown in for good measure. There are three stages to get through, as you make your way to fight the champ; Local, National, and World. Each of these leagues has ten fighters to get past, although you can skip some if you so choose. Also, it's not unlikely that the current champ of the local or national league will challenge you to a fight. I've been ranked as low as 5th and have been challenged by the top dog! You first start off fighting at the local gym, to a crowd of zero. Your skills are equally inept, but this shouldn't stop you from pummeling most of your opponents into oblivion. Once you win a few fights, your trainer, Jackel, will teach you a special punch. All told, there are four special punches for each fighter that you will gain by the time you face the world champion – Beastman! The guy I chose to start my "Main Event" (the mode that is your career) with had pretty tame special punches, but some of the fighters have some pretty cool ones! To go along with the special punches, you use the circle and X buttons to do the standard punches, and the square and triangle buttons to block punches. As you fight your three minute rounds, you'll hear the guys from both corners screaming an assortment of taunts, suggestions, and general commentary on your fighting ability.

There are seven different camera angles to choose from, including a first person view that really puts you in the action! The instant replay system is a model for all sports games, and the general interface menus are all very seamless. My only real complaint with Contender is that, as an arcade experience, I would have liked to have seen more taunts and animations from the opposing fighters. I'd like to see the big guys fall to the canvas with a thud that makes the ring shake, or the little guys get tossed about and get really knocked off of their feet. While there is some strategy to being successful with Contender, it isn't as fighter-specific as it could be. Most strategies work against most of the opponents.

Other than these minor issues, Contender is a well done arcade title that makes real good use of the Dual Shock controller, and makes for some fun filled evenings against the computer or your best friend.





DEVELOPED BY SCORE BOARD PRODUCTIONS
PUBLISHED BY EA SPORTS
WRITTEN BY ERIC

NCAA MARCH MADNESS 99

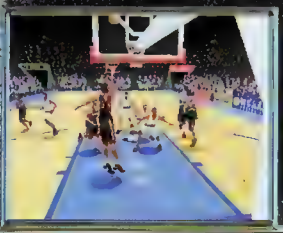
College hoops has always had a special place in my heart, even though I've lived in the Bay Area most of my life. I say "even though" because college sports, in general, are not big news around here. We have the 49er's and Raiders, the Giants and the A's, the Warriors and the Sharks, and even the Sacramento Kings are only an hour and a half away! Obviously, it's easy for Stanford, Cal, and St. Mary's to get lost in the shuffle – even when they have outstanding programs (heck, Stanford is ranked #3 in the country, but you hear more talk about Bonds' sore big toe than you do about Stanford basketball). Oh, and I guess the fact that I played a little college ball might have something to do with the fact that I enjoy the sport over all others!

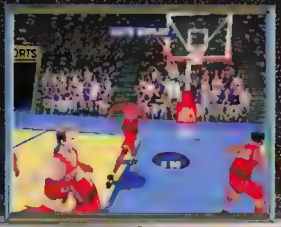
Anyway, I've been looking for a good college hoops game since Coach K on the Genesis, and I guess I'll have to continue to look. Last year, EA offered up a college hoops product that had minimal features and even less personality. This year, they've put in many new features (and some are pretty cool!), but the game, for my tastes, still can't hold a candle to its NBA counterpart (Live 99). Granted, EA Sports purposely wants to keep the two products as different as the real NBA and college games, but the execution of how this is accomplished is what makes March Madness so lackluster.

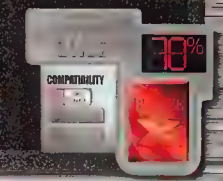
First of all, I can't find a camera angle that works to my liking. You are forced to be up in the rafters where you look down on little players, on the sidelines so that you essentially miss the action on the other side (and always step out of bounds because of this), or so far behind that it looks like the action is taking place a football field away. What makes this even more irritating is the fact that NBA Live has the best camera angles in the business. Why can't someone over at the Live development team call someone over at the March Madness development team and say "Psst, hey buddy, wanna use our camera angles?" Besides the camera problems, the look of the entire game seems fuzzy. Every time the ball goes into the low post, five or six polygonal characters crowd around, and the TV screen is a sea of "mish-mashed" colors and textures, and it's anybody's guess as to who has the ball. And, making things worse is the fact that the player animation is for lack of a more descriptive word, "goofy." The players do a funky layup that has them release the ball around their waist, and then the ball floats about four feet above the rim before it hits off the glass and either goes in, or hits the rim and skyrockets another eight feet into the air! Certainly one of the stranger sights you'll see in a hoops game. Also, the animations for dunks happen so quickly, that it appears as if the ball goes through the rim when the players is only halfway through his animation. To quote Mr. Lennon: "strange days indeed, most peculiar mama."

Some of the good things in March Madness 99 include the ability to choose from a dozen different inbounds plays, and a nice little practice mode where you can work on the execution of your plays, with or without a computer controlled defense. The create-a-player option is also well done, although I still don't know why the players don't have names. Of course, you can make the biggest offensive stud out there (65% FG and 49% 3pt FG), but he'll still only shoot in the 20-30 percent range. What's the point?

And you know what? That's exactly the feeling you'll have – what's the point. You could choose NBA Live 99 and get great camera angles, lots of terrific animations and good shooting percentages, as well as a host of moves that you can't get in MM99. Or, you could pick March Madness 99 and get nothing but bored to tears.

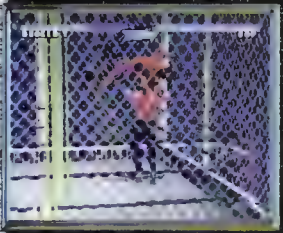






DEVELOPED BY [illegible]
PUBLISHED BY THQ
WRITTEN BY SCOTT

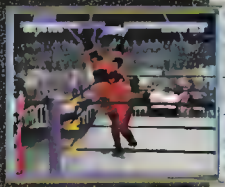
WCW/NWO THUNDER



For those of you wrestling fans that are upset about Hulk Hogan's retirement, have I got something for you. THQ's latest release, WCW/NWO Thunder. I guess since there is a NITRO, Thunder was the next to come along. When I popped this little gem into my system, I was overwhelmed with what was there. There are so many options to choose from, I just couldn't decide right away which one to get into first. Of course, you can compete for the Heavyweight, U.S. Heavyweight, and TV Titles and, as you win the belts with different wrestlers, you can earn a bonus character. There are a total of 20 hidden wrestlers in the game and it is a fun challenge to unlock them all. As I scrolled down the options menu, I saw several 1 and 2 player modes, but the one that is missing is the competition for the WCW Tag-Team title. There are a couple of tag-team modes, but they're just exhibition matches. I have to say that it was a little disappointing to see that there were no tag-team belts to be won in Thunder.

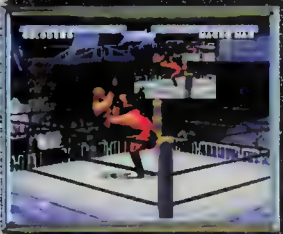
The one mode that I found to be exciting to have for a WCW PlayStation title was the Steel Cage match. Here, you can get a guy into the ring and just pulverize him. There are no weapons from outside and there are no guys running down to jump in the ring and beat the snot out of you. Speaking of weapons, how about grabbing a baseball bat and repeatedly pummeling your opponent into a lifeless lump on the arena floor? I thoroughly enjoyed myself as I watched Big Poppa Pump smash in the head of that useless little dog-faced gremlin.

There are a lot of similarities between Nitro and Thunder, but not too many differences. There are lots of wrestlers in both games, but, in Thunder, the wrestlers are a lot more up to date than the ones in Nitro. What other game on the PlayStation includes the most monstrous of them? Do you know who I am talking about? If you don't, I'll tell you. GOLDBERG! Everybody chant it now. The addition of the steel cage match is a welcome feature. Having the cage match in the game puts Thunder over Nitro, but still in the way of becoming number one is Warzone. If you were to compare Warzone with Thunder, Warzone just barely gets the nod, thanks mostly to the ability to create your own wrestler. Warzone is still the only wrestling title on the market right now that gives you this feature.



One of the best options in Thunder is that you can change who your friends are. If I want to make Raven a member of the 4 Horsemen, I can. What happens if you change your alliance? This is a good question. I made Meng a member of the Wolfpack. His outfit changed and when I called for ringside help, Kevin Nash came running to my rescue. These are the sorts of little things that make Thunder so dang fun to play.

I have played many a wrestling game in the last year or so, and this is one of my favorites so far. As far as PlayStation wrestling titles go, the latest titles are as follows: WCW Nitro, WWF Warzone, and now Thunder. Of these titles, Thunder ranks right up there with Warzone, however it doesn't quite match up. If I were to give a title belt to each one of the three latest PlayStation titles, Nitro would be TV champ, Thunder would be US Heavyweight champ, and Warzone would hold the World Heavyweight Title. For those of you who watch the "sport" religiously, as I do, you understand my ranking system. THQ has done a fine job with Thunder, making the sequel even more enjoyable than Nitro. Now, if only it had the create-a-wrestler option.



NBA SHOOTOUT 99

989 Studios / 989 Studios / January

Here are the latest screens from 989 Sports' upcoming NBA hoops game. NBA Shootout 99 represents the fourth installment of the popular series, and what's really noteworthy is that it's the first one to be developed completely in-house. Yup, 989 went out and hired some dedicated hoops hackers, and they're letting it all hang out in '99! There are twice as many player animations as there were last year, so you'll see new moves, like drop steps down on the block, reverse lay ups, and finger rolls that Magic would be proud of. More than 35 signature dunks have been captured – even Garnett's flip off the glass alley oop monster jam. Players high five, signal for a timeout, and even have a nice fake first step jab. New for '99 is a slam dunk contest where you can actually create your own dunk – cool. Besides all of the cool new stuff, you'll still find all of the other goodies required in a hoops game, like complete stat tracking, create a player mode, Icon Passing and Icon Cutting, and tons of camera angles.

NCAA FINAL FOUR 99

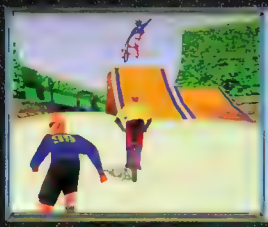
989 Studios / Killer Games / January

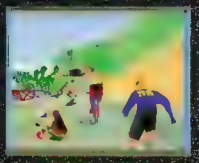
989 Studios is bringing out their own college hoops title this year, continuing their battle with EA Sports for world domination in the different sports categories. This is 989's first attempt at college hoops, and they have elected to go with a game (NCAA Final Four) that some of you may recall seeing on a PlayStation product before (that pitiful hoops game was courtesy of the all-but defunct Mindscape). However, if that game had one tenth of what Final Four 99 has, then it would have been a hundred times better! Anyway, here's a peek at what's inside this new title: 305 teams, each with their own logos and home & away uniforms, tons of year-end awards (player of the year, conference teams, 1st and 2nd team All-Americans), a new shot meter, and stat tracking in 32 different categories. New camera angles include cutaways and zoom ins. Crowds cheer, wave their hands, and boo at the opposition. Quinn Buckner does the play-by-play, and players can choose from dozens of offensive and defensive plays.

3XTREME

989 Studios / 989 Studios / February

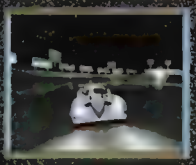
3Extreme is on the way, and 989 Studios has brought the title into the 3D world with detailed landscapes and bright, flashy visual effects. The new Gen-X sports title brings to the table 22 different courses, complete with numerous jumps, short cuts, gates, and other interactive objects. Some of the course environments include subways, canyons, mountains, parks, coastlines, and islands. As you race on you skate board, mountain bike or roller blades, you will be able to pull off some nasty stunts, including rail slides, kick flips, peg slides, tail whips, can-can's, table tops, and tail grabs. 989 motioned captured 1998 Summer X Games Gold medalist Andy Macdonald, along with Super BMX rider Dave Mirra to generate authentic moves and tricks. Winning races will deliver the greenbacks, so you'll be able to upgrade your equipment as you go along. There will be a dozen racers to choose from, with many hidden characters (and courses) to discover. The Dual Shock compatibility lets you feel the pain of a missed landing!





SPORTS CAR GT

EA / Westwood Pacific / February



Sports Car GT, from Electronic Arts, looks to join home big time competition in the form of SCEA's Gran Turismo 2 and Namco's Ridge Racer Type 4. Sports Car GT is based on the GT brand of racing (modified production cars on road tracks) and includes licensed GT cars from such makers as Callaway, McLaren, Mercedes, BMW, Saleen, and Vector. Overall, there will be more than 45 licensed GT cars, when all is said and done. The cars will be able to be upgraded and tuned as the season progresses. Five North American tracks are included in Sports Car GT, two of which will be Laguna Seca Raceway and Las Vegas Motor Speedway. Multiple camera angles and the now classic "Gran Turismo style" replays are also part of the package. Additionally, racers can choose the time of day they wish to race and, should you feel so inclined, can even elect to race up to 24 hours straight! We'll have more on this racing simulation little as it becomes available.

FREESTYLE BOARDIN' 99

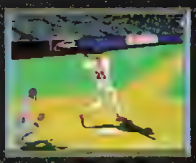
Capcom / Ponycanyon / February

Capcom, publishers of some of the biggest PlayStation titles ever (ah, Resident Evil), is putting out its first sports title – Freestyle Boardin' '99. The soon-to-be-released title will be going up against some formidable competition, specifically from 989's Cool Boarders 3 (which received a "Gold" rating in our November issue). Capcom, as all of their fighting and Mega Man history will attest, is more at home with the non-sports titles, so they had Japanese developer Ponycanyon put together this snowfest. There are four main play modes in Freestyle Boardin' '99: Championship mode, Competition mode, Free Style mode, and a Vs. mode. In any event, the object is to accumulate technique points in order to build up your character's abilities, which range from max speed, cornering and technique, to power and recovery. Each of the five different boarders starts out with 120 points that are spread throughout the five different categories. There's a dozen different courses to start out with, and they vary from downhill, to super-dual-slalom, half-pipe, and straight jump. Check out our review in an upcoming issue!

MLB 2000

989 Studios / 989 Sports / April

Baseball fans get ready to learn at the mouth – MLB 2000 is on the way and it looks better than ever! Arguably the most improved sports franchise from 989 Studios, MLB 2000 looks to bring even more realism home. Here's just a smattering of the new and improved features: players are now sculptured to their correct height and weight, player's actual faces have now been attached to their polygonal arms and legs, Total Control Pitching allows you to paint the corners and deliver pinpoint accuracy, Total Control batting and Total Control Fielding have been made smoother and seamless, new camera angles like zoom in and cutaway for realistic TV presentation, new 3D stadium models show more detail than ever before, and Vin Scully and Dave Campbell team up to provide the play-by-play and color commentary. MLB 2000 brings back the familiar options of GM mode, roster management, create-a-player, and an enhanced Spring Training mode. Look for more previews of MLB 2000 in upcoming issues of PSExtreme Sports – you won't want to miss a thing!



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EXRATED

AKUJI: THE HEARTLESS

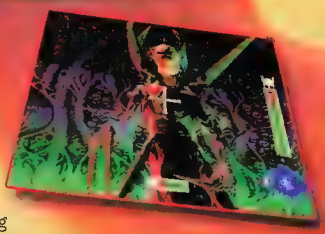
PUBLISHED BY EIDOS — DEVELOPED BY CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

GENRE: ACTION ADVENTURE
AVAILABLE: NOW

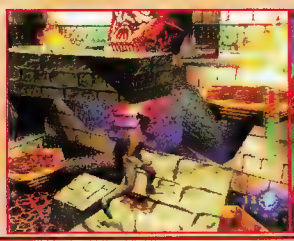
Akuji The Heartless is one of the best surprises for me this holiday season. While I have seen the game in different stages over the past year and a half, I never really became a believer in the product. While it shared many of the team members from GEX: Enter the Gecko (one of my all-time favorites) and also shared some common technology, the game just didn't seem to be going anywhere... how wrong I was.

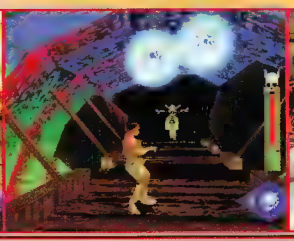
Akuji casts the player in the title role and, through a story that is explained with some very high quality CG work and the voice of Richard (Shaft) Roundtree, sets you on a quest to rid the underworld of the souls of your ancestors. Why does Akuji need to do this? Well, it seems that evil runs in your family and, well... you're dead! That's right, thanks to your evil brother, you've been sent to the other side and the dude has claimed your beloved wife as his own. Because of your family's badness, the keeper of the underworld (Baron Samedi) doesn't want their souls polluting the joint and giving it a bad name, so he makes Akuji a deal. Rid the underworld of the souls of your ancestors and he will bring Akuji back to life, allowing him to reunite with his precious Kesho.

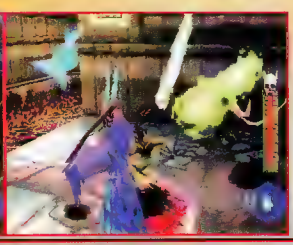
Akuji takes place in four different "vestibules" of the underworld, over 16 different, other-worldly, levels that are loaded with ghosts, ghouls, serpents and other awful creatures from the dark side — culminating in the final showdown with your brother. As Akuji, you can jump, climb, move laterally on ropes and other wall surfaces, hang and hand-over-hand it on ceiling grids, fire a number of weapons — all that are required at one point or another, crawl, hang and pull yourself up, perform a deadly uppercut and turn into a razor-clawed panther! In addition, there are a number of objects and vehicles that Akuji must make use of in his travels, including a river Styx-style gondola, complete with the Ghost of Christmas Future as the pilot, and a hang glider.



The environments are absolutely gorgeous, with outstanding lighting effects and excellent color usage. The environments are drawn in great detail, including flowing rivers and waterfalls, many reflec-

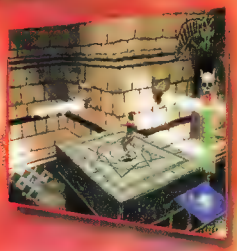




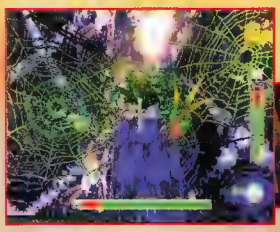


tive surfaces and different indoor and outdoor terrain. An early example of this is a red, semi-transparent mirror that shows a moving, floating platform in its reflection. This platform, however, can not be seen outside of its reflection, so Akuji must take a leap of faith to where it is located parallel to the mirror... very cool. In addition, the camera, a variation of the GEX: ETG camera, allows the player to manually rotate the camera behind Akuji and, with a quick tap of the R2 button, get it to swing behind our hero, looking in the direction he is facing. While there are occasional lapses and the camera will, at times, pull away and not come back until you tap R2, it works pretty well. Also, the first-person, look around and shoot camera is absolutely essential for picking off distant targets and for trying to find all of those souls you need to collect, if you want to make it to the final showdown with Akuji's bro' (40 souls required for the big show). Richard Roundtree is well-cast in the role of Akuji and the presence of his voice really adds to the voodoo-witchcraft that is at the heart of this dark tale, as does the soundtrack, which is excellent and indispensable in helping to achieve the believability of the story and gameplay environment.

The game itself is a combination of jumping, shooting, climbing, puzzle solving and hand-to-hand combat. There are many different enemies, a number of which are exclusive to the specific tile set that you are playing within, and a number of different techniques required for dispatching of them. The game starts off on the easy side and has a nice, slow build in its difficulty level. The levels also get bigger as you go, with more backtracking, puzzle solving and key chasing required as you move to vestibules three and four.



Crystal Dynamics has successfully created another memorable, original character and a game that is easy to get into, yet very satisfying and challenging to complete. My take on Akuji the Heartless is that it is the first successful combination of action/platform and adventure gaming. Kind of like GEX or Crash Bandicoot meets Lara Croft. While the environments aren't as big as Tomb Raider, they aren't as restricted as Crash or GEX, and the platform and shooting action is top-notch. Akuji is a welcome surprise and a great play, one that has had to compete against Metal Gear Solid, Zelda and Syphon Filter for my playing time, and has come away holding its own — highly recommended.



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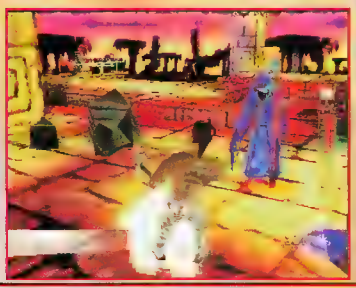


THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

98%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

Analog Control Compatible

Vibration Function Compatible

Crystal Dynamics has successfully created another memorable, original character and a game that is easy to get into, yet very satisfying and challenging to complete. My take on Akuji the Heartless is that it is the first successful combination of action/platform and adventure gaming. Kind of like GEX or Crash Bandicoot meets Lara Croft. While the environments aren't as big as Tomb Raider, they aren't as restricted as Crash or GEX, and the platform and shooting action is top-notch. Akuji is a welcome surprise and a great play, one that has had to compete against Metal Gear Solid, Zelda and Syphon Filter for my playing time, and has come away holding its own — highly recommended.

EXTRA TIED

ABE'S EXODDUS

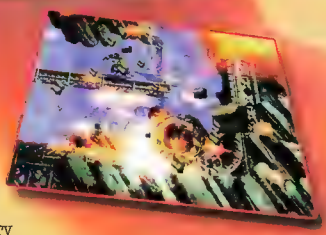
PUBLISHED BY GT INTERACTIVE — DEVELOPED BY ODDWORLD INHABITANTS

GENRE: ACTION PLATFORM
AVAILABLE: NOW

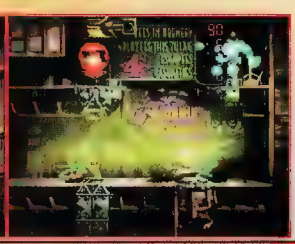
Last year's Oddworld: Abe's Oddysey was one of those games which people had strong feelings about-they either loved it or hated it. Personally, I loved it. The memorable creatures, interesting storyline, and gorgeous backgrounds made the game come alive for me. Apparently, I was not alone — the original sold over a million copies. A sequel was inevitable (especially since the instructions noted that Abe's Oddysee was the first in a planned "quintology"). The bad news: Abe's Exoddus is not the second game in a five game series. The good news: while we are waiting for the "real" sequel, Munch's Oddysee, the designers have graced us with a "bonus game."

The story goes as follows: As Abe, a Mudokon slave laborer in the Rupture Farms meat processing plant on Oddworld, you stumbled across a sinister plan. With profits down and the two species being used to make their food products near extinction, the Glukkon owners have decided to create a new snack-using you and your fellow Mudokon workers! You escaped, rescued up to 99 of your co-workers, and fulfilled a prophecy in the process. This time around, the Glukkons are digging up bones from sacred Mudokon burial grounds to make a drink known as SoulStorm Brew. You've got to destroy the locations where the bones are being mined, rescue the Mudokon laborers, and free the trapped souls of your ancestors.

As usual, Abe has no weapons. You've therefore got to run, jump, and sneak your way through the various levels. When you meet fellow Mudokons, you can talk to them and get them to follow you to safety. When you meet other creatures: such as Sligs, Scrabs, Paramites, Fleeches, Slurgs, and Slogs (my spell checker just had a major attack over this sentence), you must either avoid them, utilize the environment to destroy them, or possess their bodies. Possessed characters can perform tasks for you — such as pulling inaccessible levers or shooting each other — to help you get through the levels.

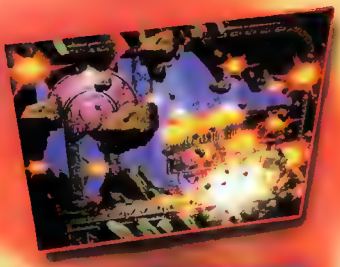


If it seems complicated, it is. Fortunately, the designers use the initial areas as a sort of "training ground" for the rest of the game. There are lots of clues, such as paintings on the walls, signs, and story stones, which let you know how to control Abe and how to get past certain obstacles. I don't have the space to detail everything that you will encounter, but there are teleporters, mine cars, bombs, wells, electric walls, trap doors, motion detectors, mines, drills, and more. Don't let the cute title character fool you



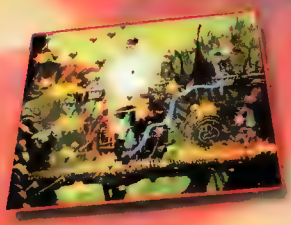
into thinking that the game is for children. Some of the puzzles are pretty complicated, and the game is quite violent. Among other things, Abe and his Oddfellows can be electrocuted, sliced up, eaten alive, squished, or blown into pieces (hence the "Teen" rating).

Since there is no score, the only way to measure your progress is to check the status screen — it tells you how many Mudokons you have saved, how many remain, and how many have been killed (oops!). Your goal is to rescue as many as possible, and you are given an infinite number of lives to do so. Believe me — you'll use up a lot of them! It may take several "deaths" for you to figure out certain puzzles. This is definitely a game of "trial and error." The challenge and the enjoyment comes from trying to figure out the proper sequences, patterns, or routes through an area. If you're not known for your patience, you may want to sit this one out. Fortunately, Abe's Exoddus never becomes too hard to the point of being unreasonably frustrating. With each attempt to solve a puzzle, you feel as if you are getting closer to the solution and you are persuaded to try again.

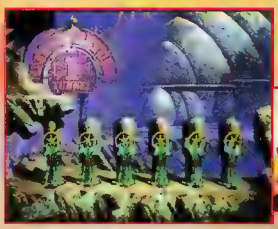


Abe's Exoddus follows the standard formula for a sequel — it keeps a lot of what worked before and adds just enough to make it seem fresh. Along with the new locations and characters, you now have the ability to possess several different creatures and you can speak to several Mudokons at once (but you also now have to deal with their emotions). The ability to "fart," which was a throwaway sound in the first game, takes on added significance. Depending on your diet, the results can be explosive! Although you don't need to play the original to understand or enjoy the sequel, it sure helps since the controls are nearly identical.

As with the first game, my only criticism concerns some of the graphics and the uneven level of difficulty. At times, it is hard to tell which objects are "interactive" and which part of the terrain is accessible. I also found myself breezing through some of the initial levels, only to be stuck for a long time on a difficult timing sequence. Just as I thought that the game had increased in difficulty, I found myself back in another easy area. Overall, I found the sequel to be slightly easier than the original. I'm not sure whether this is due to the fact that the puzzles were actually easier, or that I knew what to expect this time.



Long-time readers, or those of you who have checked our archives, will note that Thomas J. gave the original Abe's Oddworld an 80%. However, as you can see, I've awarded the sequel a Gold. Does this mean that the sequel is that much better? Nochalk it up to a difference of opinion between reviewers. I would have given the original game a Gold as well. Few videogames go to such great lengths to create an imaginative world for us to experience. The graphics are not just window dressing either — the underlying game is great fun to play. It is definitely one of my favorite games this year and a recommended purchase. If you like platform games with a mix of puzzles and hand-eye coordination, and enjoy a compelling story, Abe is your man... er, Mudokon.



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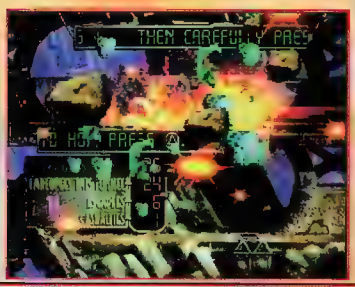


THE BUTTON LINE

PS EXTREME

94%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

Few videogames go to such great lengths to create an imaginative world for us to experience. The graphics are not just window dressing either — the underlying game is great fun to play. It is definitely one of my favorite games this year and a recommended purchase. If you like platform games with a mix of puzzles and hand-eye coordination, and enjoy a compelling story, Abe is your man... er, Mudokon.

ED

EXRATED

TINY TANK

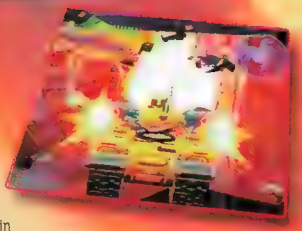
PUBLISHED BY SONY — DEVELOPED BY ANDNOW/APPALOOSA INTERACTIVE

GENRE: ACTION SHOOTER
AVAILABLE: NOW

Coming to market via AndNow and Ed Annunziata, Tiny Tank has been dubbed "The Cute Killing Machine." Tiny Tank is a force to be reckoned with. The ultimate goal in Tiny Tank is to work your way to the game's boss — Mutank. He is the mechanical menace that has been sucking up all the oxygen in his efforts to prevent the all too dreaded rust. So where Tiny Tank started off, some 100 years ago, as a cute little spokesperson to aid funding the battle efforts, he now awakens after having been gunned down by Mutank, and his snout set to kill Mutank and his minions.

Armed with a Gattling Gun, XA-12 Rocket, Mortars, a Freeze Gun, Super Blaster, Pop Gun, a Plasma Blaster and Teeny Weeny Tanks, Tiny is no slouch, by any stretch of the imagination. With the ability to assimilate debris from fallen adversaries, Tiny Tank can strengthen his arsenal and enhance his capabilities with little difficulty. Tiny Tank even has Teeny Weeny Tanks that spew forth from his bowels, dealing death to all who are foolish enough to remain in their presence. Doing battle against over 25 different enemies, the Tankster is ready to go one-on-one, head-to-head or two player simultaneous — take your pick.

Basically, the game is an action 3D shooter. Sporting serious attitude and a vocabulary that will have many shaking their heads and reaching for the bar of soap, Tiny Tank can motivate by hovering, rolling and rocketing over all sorts of terrain. As he destroys enemies, Tiny can snag their brains and their armaments to use as his own. The gameplay takes place in numerous settings that include places like deserts littered with mines, booby-trapped conveyer systems and snow covered battle zones. There are the obligatory puzzles to solve and sections to open before advancing into certain phases of the gameplay. There are nice CG cut scenes to enhance the story aspects of the game, and Tiny even has a love interest in OBE, the satellite that orbits in space and watches his arse-nal.



The visual appeal of the game is average. The textures are not going to blow you away but they do a nice job of setting the gritty scene for the story that unfolds.. The frame-rate is good and the camera works well. Tiny Tank leaves tread-marks on the ground as he travels, and you can see additional weapons load onto his frame as he acquires them. Tiny can maintain a different bearing and heading by rotating his turret independent of the tank's body. The control in this game is absolutely terrific, with no perceptible delay in any of the functions or commands. The terrain varies, thus creating high-ground advantages and the like.

The sound effects and soundtrack in this title are top notch. Explosions, right on through the voices, have been recorded and implemented with great care. A nice feature in Tiny Tanks is that you can put your own music CDs into the PlayStation and wreak havoc to proprietary tunage. The action is fast-paced and non-stop. On top of all this, the game is loads of fun, and will have many who play it finding great joy in the little tank that could. Definitely a great holiday purchase.

THE BOTTOM LINE

98%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 or 2 Players
- Analog Controller Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

FABIAN

NECTARIS

PUBLISHED BY *JALECO* — DEVELOPED BY *HUDSON*

GENRE: *STRATEGY*
AVAILABLE: *NOW*

This is not a new game. Military Madness was one of my favorite games on the TurboGrafx 16, all those years ago. My best friend and I would stay up all night playing against each other for weeks on end, forsaking girlfriends, pets and even food. It was that good. Either that, or we were freaks. (The latter is the more likely.)

Nectaris: Military Madness isn't really a sequel, it's more of a port. A sequel would require major upgrades to graphics and gameplay. This is more like Military Madness "Plus." The game plays exactly the same as the original, but has improved 3D graphics in the pre-scripted battle cut-screens and a scenario editor that wasn't found in the original, plus the obligatory FMV intro. The graphics for the map screens, where all the strategy takes place, are pretty much the same as the original. Small, monochromatic sprites represent the player's units (tanks, infantry, aircraft, etc.) and the terrain is basically just a blurry mishmosh of hills, roads, foliage and various whatnot.

You start each scenario with a predetermined number and kind of units. To move, you select a unit and an octagonal grid appears, showing how far you can move across the terrain. If you come within range of an enemy unit, you may then attack and the battle cut scene begins. I call it a cut scene because you have no control. It's basically a movie generated by the computer, based on the stats of the battle (just like the original). The amount of damage you will inflict is determined by your unit's stats, the type of terrain you're on, your position, the number of "friendlies" around you giving support and some other minor variables. Some types of units have long range attack abilities, but not much defense. Others have strong defense, but not much mobility. Pretty standard stuff. You'll also have some infantry troops which are required to take enemy bases. The only objective for each scenario is to either capture enemy bases or wipe out the enemy entirely. All that need be done is occupy a base with an infantry unit and it's yours.

Okay, yes, that's all well and good, you say, but sometimes a game can still be fun even without having spectacular graphics. Is Nectaris fun? Good golly, man! Tell us, you plead. Well, son, it's really hard for me to say whether or not someone who never played and enjoyed the original will like this game. I find that I still enjoy the strategy Nectaris has to offer. The two-player strategy is superb and something you don't find much in console strategy games. But, I fear that the first time player isn't going to get hooked right away and will be turned off by the chunky TG-16 graphics. This is certainly not strategy of the caliber of Final Fantasy Tactics, Vandal Hearts, or even Kartia.

No, this is strategy-lite. There aren't huge lists of spells or weapons to be acquired, no grand adventures to embark on — the whole game is a collection of scenarios, unrelated to each other. While I'm still a big fan of the original and enjoy going back and playing it, I feel I cannot honestly recommend this title as a good PlayStation game. It would have made a great update for the Turbo-CD, and I would have gushed all over it if it had come out in 1989, but it has no business being a new game here in 1999. I'd feel good telling you to rent it to decide if you will enjoy playing it long-term. I still do, but I'm a freak.

THE BOTTOM LINE

78%

COMPATIBILITY

1or2 Players

TIM

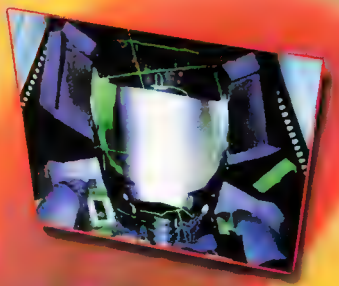
EXTRA

BLAST RADIUS

PUBLISHED BY PSYGNOSIS — DEVELOPED BY CAMDEN STUDIOS

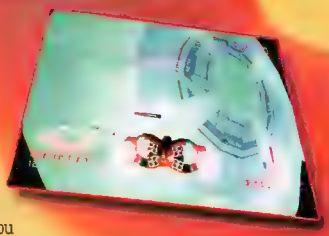
GENRE: 3D SHOOTER
AVAILABLE: NOW

Once on the forefront of PlayStation technology, Psygnosis has had its share of hits and misses. It seems lately, for every Wipeout, Destruction Derby, G Police and Colony Wars, there's been an O.D.T., Rascal and Psybadek. Their newest space shooter, Blast Radius, falls into the latter category.

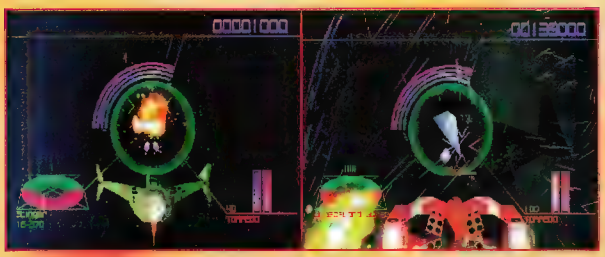


While at first glance you might think it's an off-shoot or addition to the Colony Wars series (especially since it borrows heavily from the original's graphic engine and physics), that couldn't be further from the truth. These are two separate entities and have altogether different play styles. In fact, Blast Radius comes out of Psygnosis' Camden Studios, whereas Colony Wars and its sequel were developed in-house at their Liverpool offices. While the Colony Wars series has always been more like a space shooter/simulation — with grand-scale, epic storylines, strategic missions, multiple paths to embark on, and multiple endings to discover; Blast Radius can be likened to more of a stripped down model, and is pretty much just about pure arcade action; with power-ups, upgradeable items to purchase, a two-player head-to-head option, via the link-cable, and a high-score table.

So, forgetting all that, is the game fun? The answer is a definite "yes." The action is fast-paced and there are always plenty of enemies attempting to cut you down. While Blast Radius does attempt to give the player mission objectives before entering each level, they are all basically of the "shoot and destroy the enemy" type, with the occasional "protect the convoy" thrown in for good measure. From there, you just jump in and start shooting anything that shoots back at you.

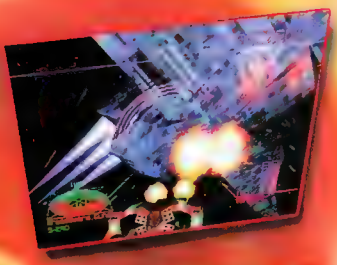


Blast Radius gives you a choice of four ships to select from at the outset, each with varying attributes, and then lets you upgrade them with better lasers, shields and secondary weapons as you progress through each sector. They way you earn cash is by taking out as many enemies as you can and collecting the occasional bounty (represented by an orange colored sphere) they leave behind in their wake. Each sector is broken down into sub-levels and, as you progress, more upgrades become available to you (at higher prices, of course). When you complete a level, you get the obligatory debriefing/status screen, where you'll find out the stuff you're made of. In addition to how many primary and secondary crafts you destroyed and how much bounty you collected, it also lists the accuracy of your shots and how long it took to complete the mission. Score bonuses are award-



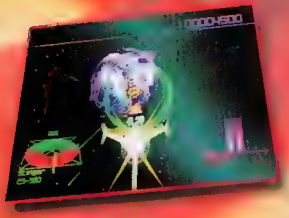
ed for high accuracy and finishing in a certain amount of time.

In game, your craft controls a lot like it would in Colony Wars, with main, rapid-fire lasers (that never overheat), torpedoes for secondary weapons, and the ability to speed up, slow down and apply afterburners. Your ship can also roll left or right to avoid oncoming enemy fire. With the press of a button, you can cycle through and target any ship, which also display the amount of shields or energy they have left. There are three separate views to choose from and there is a simplified version of the 3D radar found in CW, which can be zoomed in and out with the L and R buttons. The game has analog support, but strangely doesn't utilize the vibration function (this might change with the final production version).



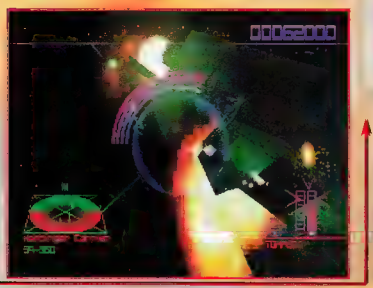
The graphics of the game are quite good, although not as sharp and spectacular as those found in Vengeance. The use of streaking "space dust" really gives the impression of blasting through space and the backgrounds are filled with the prerequisite planets, suns, nebulas and the occasional super nova. In addition, the explosions, lens flares, and ship models are all high-quality and very well drawn. The music, on the other hand, is the usual bland techno we've heard so many times before and doesn't really add, to or detract from, the game.

My biggest gripe with Blast Radius is that, because it's an arcade experience, it should have had a two-player simultaneous option via a split-screen. Instead, the developers opted to go with the link-cable for head-to-head dogfighting, which is cool but, honestly, how many of you actually have the darn thing, two TVs conveniently located a few feet away from each other and two PlayStations to play it on? Don't forget that you need a second copy of the game as well. The only other complaint I have is that you don't get any continues, and are only allowed to save at the end of every sector. That means you have to beat three levels first, and it can be very frustrating to die on the third level then have to go back to the first and play through again.



To sum things up: Blast Radius offers gamers a different take on the space shooter theme. If you're in the market for a 3D, arcade-style shooter with sharp graphics but not very deep gameplay, then look no further. On the other hand, if you are a Colony Wars fan, and appreciate the deep quest and progressive, cinema-like storyline, then you might find yourself sorely disappointed. In the end, it all boils down to personal taste (doesn't it always?) and, for me, I found Blast Radius a pleasant departure, but not something I'll play for more than a few weeks. A good, but not great, game.

GREG



THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

80%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Link Cable 2 Consoles
- Analog Control Compatible

Blast Radius offers gamers a different take on the space shooter theme. If you're in the market for a 3D, arcade-style shooter with sharp graphics but not very deep gameplay, then look no further. On the other hand, if you are a Colony Wars fan, and appreciate the deep quest and progressive, cinema-like storyline, then you might find yourself sorely disappointed. In the end, it all boils down to personal taste (doesn't it always?) and, for me, I found Blast Radius a pleasant departure, but not something I'll play for more than a few weeks. A good, but not great, game.

UPRISING X

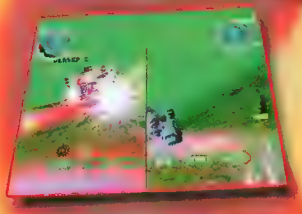
PUBLISHED BY *3DO* — DEVELOPED BY *CYCLONE STUDIOS*

GENRE:
ACTION STRATEGY
AVAILABLE:
NOW

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... well, not exactly. However, considering that you play a member of the Rebel Alliance fighting against the Imperium and its Emperor (who have developed a weapon which is powerful enough to devastate a planet) — you can see how I could be confused. Not that Uprising X is a Star Wars clone, though. It is not a space shooter but a land-based tank combat game.

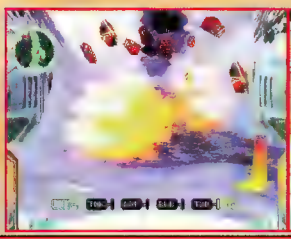
As Wraith One, you are sent to engage Imperium forces on various sorties. You must establish bases (called citadels) to oversee the construction of factories which produce infantry, tanks, air assault vehicles and bombers. You can also man the citadel's weapons to repel the enemy. Once your factories are up and running, you can deploy these back-up units to aid in the battle. Several training missions teach you the building and fighting aspects of the game, but it is easy to grasp the concept even without them.

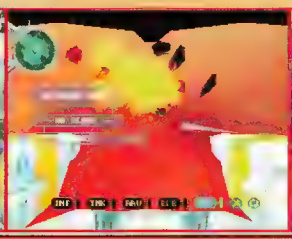
The controls are not quite so easy to grasp. Every single button on the controller must be used — aside from the directional movement, you've got to learn to strafe left and right, look up and down, cycle and fire weapons, and select and deploy back-up forces. Fortunately, you are able to assign each function to any button you want and the analog controllers are also supported.

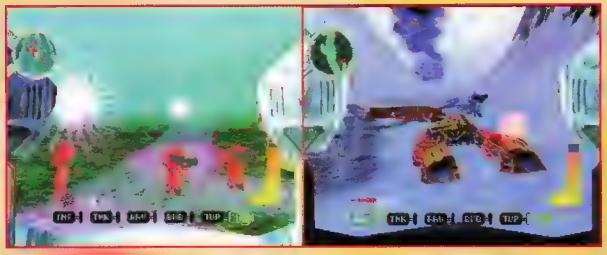


Uprising X may be fast in the action department, but graphically it is somewhat lacking. At first glance, you might think you are playing an N64 game (in the bad sense of the term). There is some serious fog in every level, which makes visibility low, and there are many simplistic textures which repeat themselves. I understand that the armies are supposed to be color-coordinated for easy identification — red for the Imperium, blue for the Rebels, and yellow for your alien "allies" — but the use of bright primary colors also gives the game a less-serious look to it. Weapon fire is nicely done, however, casting light upon the ground as it heads towards an enemy. Smoke and explosion effects are also fine.

There are twelve different levels with objectives ranging from protecting a convoy to locating a downed ship. Despite the various briefings and the changing terrain (ice planets, swamp planets, desert planets, etc.), each mission is pretty much the same — shoot all the bad guys and try not to get shot yourself. You've got to watch out for your own forces on the battlefield as well. Your Wraith tank is quite capable of shooting down your own ships or running over your own infantry. Speaking of which, the infantry and all the other forces feature communications "chatter" which adds atmosphere to the game. Unfortunately, you'll most likely hear them screaming for help. While it isn't quite "Saving Private Ryan," your troops can still get cut to pieces if you deploy them in certain areas

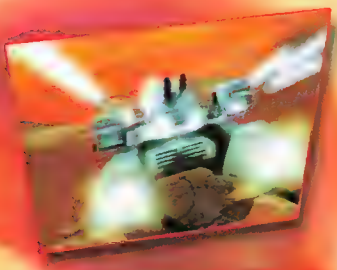






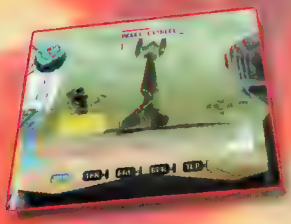
before clearing out enemy turrets and tanks.

Fans of Command & Conquer will appreciate this game even though it leans more on the action side than the strategy side. Depending on which factories you choose to build, and therefore which back-up forces are available, each battle can be different. If you are killed, you are allowed only one chance to continue before the game ends. Fortunately, there are icons which repair your Wraith when collected, as well as special weapons icons- but you usually have to destroy an enemy to obtain them. At the end of each mission, you are given a status report showing the casualties sustained by each party before being allowed to save your progress.



Although the one-player game is good, it tends to become monotonous over time. Fortunately, Uprising X also features a two-player mode with several options. In the Challenge Mode, both players are given the same objective and compete against each other in one of three contests — a wraith versus citadel showdown, manning a citadel for a last stand, and "infantry crush." The latter involves running over as many enemy troopers as possible, crushing them under your treads as they scream for help. Definitely not for the squeamish, but surprisingly fun. In the Death Match mode, the two players go one-on-one with their Wraith tanks in one of three arenas. Finally, there is also a Siege mode in which players race to establish more citadels than their opponent. The two-player games take place on a vertically split-screen, and there is slight slowdown, as well as the same amount of fog as found in the one player levels. Still, the two-player mode is a lot of fun and adds tremendous replay value to the game.

Now, for the complaints. While you can utilize the citadel's weapons to repel attackers, the control feels pretty much the same as the tank and isn't as smooth as I expected a tower gun turret to be. You also cannot play as the infantry soldiers or the air assault vehicles. I know it would have made programming the game that more difficult, but it would have been neat to play multiple vehicles, a la Return Fire. The ability to continue once per level is appreciated, but you start back exactly where you died — usually in the middle of a huge bombardment. This makes the continue almost useless — whatever killed you the first time is ready to do it again. I would have preferred some sort of checkpoint system instead.



Uprising X is a good game — it's just not excellent. The single-player contest becomes repetitive and the missions seem too similar. Most enemies pop out of thin air (and often behind you) and get lost easily in the heavy fog. The fog and simplistic textures make the game look like an older title — especially when compared to the new crop of games with high-resolution graphics and a frame rate of 60 fps. Fortunately, the excellent two-player contest, with its many options, makes the game worth checking out. I almost prefer this mode more than the main game.

MARK

THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

88%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 or 2 Players
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

Uprising X is a good game — it's just not excellent. The single-player contest becomes repetitive and the missions seem too similar. Most enemies pop out of thin air (and often behind you) and get lost easily in the heavy fog. The fog and simplistic textures make the game look like an older title — especially when compared to the new crop of games with high-resolution graphics and a frame rate of 60 fps. Fortunately, the excellent two-player contest, with its many options, makes the game worth checking out. I almost prefer this mode more than the main game.

EXTRA TED

PSYBADEK

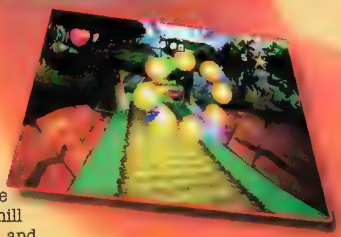
PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY PSYGNOSIS

GENRE: ACTION PLATFORM
AVAILABLE: NOW

It's all about being cool, or is it? Pysgnosis' Psybadek tries its darndest to be hip — mixing elements of racing, puzzle solving, and 3D platform action in a world where dekking is a way of life. With the Vans license and some really cool looking art and packaging, I was expecting a crazy, phat, ebola (sick) experience. What I got was something that I wasn't totally prepared for.

All I gotta say, when dek's become a reality, I will be the rockenist kid on the block but, until then, I will have to settle for the virtual future of Psybadek. The basic premise behind the game goes a little something like this: Krakken, a bad man with a bad smell, is trying to invade our world because it is so much funkier than his (duh?). In doing so, he kidnaps your homies. So you gotta go and dek your way through Psyba-Zone and start representin'. The prefered mode of travel in Psyba-Zone: Dekking — it's basically a hover board.

Let me preface the rest of this review with a little disclaimer: I like to think that I am 'in', 'cool', 'hip', and 'know wus' up!'. That pretty much means I got the baggy pants, wool cap, Airwalks (sorry Vans), and my parents think I am some kind of freak (As do the rest of us - ed.). So now, without further ado, I begin as every good gamer should, by reading the manual (don't y'all do that 1st?). It is actually a really cool read. Prop's go out to the Pysgnosis manual writers!



After the game intro, you must choose between 2 dekkers: Xako and Mia. I didn't find much difference between the two, other then their gender. Next stop — dek park and, like a Sunday in the park, there is not much to do there other than warp to Psyba-Zone. Psyba-Zone consists of 4 worlds: Ice World, Jungle World, Desert World, and the Underworld (each with 8 stages each plus a bonus one). The worlds start out with only 1 level open, beat that and you will go to the next level.

The gameplay reminds me a lot of Crash Bandicoot. There are 4 different types of modes. The first is straight-up downhill shredding. You just avoid obstacles and enemies, collect stars, and try to finish as fast as you can. Second is free-roaming platform levels. This is where the game has the most problems! The camera angle (3rd person behind the back) makes a lot of the maneuvering insanely difficult. I was well on my way to becoming the frustrated gamer with my con-

troller ready to smash through the big screen but, thanks to my goldfish who looked me in the eyes like I was some kind of crazy, I came to the realization that it wasn't my fault, but the camera. Thank you Hermie. You can not change the camera (except to look behind you and that just doesn't cut it). Then, there are two boss-style stages. One involves a simple race between you and the boss. Then, the following stage will have you fighting the boss using phat power-ups. Finding the elusive 'weak-spot' is a real challenge here.

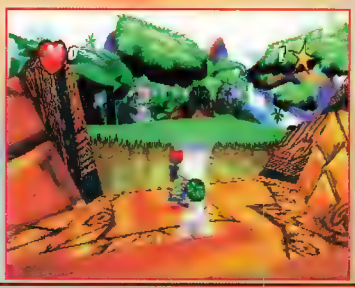
Psybadek utilizes Sony's Dual Shock controller and does it fairly well. The analog control makes dekking fairly simple, it only takes about 10-15 minutes to get the basics down. The game features tricks which are performed by using a way hard stunt meter that circles around you. The more buddies you save, the more stunts you can do. I could go out back and learn to pull off 1080's faster than I can pull up specific stunts in Psybadek. You also must be heading for big air before you can pull off any trick successfully. The game also takes advantage of the vibration function, which I found of no benefit as it is a bit unpredictable. It is more along the lines of a random hand massage option.

Where the game really fails is on its platform levels, the collision is horrible. There is this one Ewok-esque level, where you must travel along bridges from one tree platform to another and there is a point where you can go right through a tree (and die). That's not cool. There are many times where you will also just all-of-a-sudden find yourself off-screen, having gone through a wall. What up wit 'dat? However, the graphics are up to par. On the positive tip, some of the courses make you feel like you are in the middle of a funked-up Dr. Seuss book.

As for the music and ambience, I was expecting a skate soundtrack and was greeted with more of a jazzy thang. A pretty cool score but it did get repetitive. You might have more luck with your local college rock station. One last warning: Beware the save/load menu. The cancel/confirm buttons are totally whack!

If you were thinking Psybadek was going to be a straight-up, adrenaline pumping, dekking experience, well, you were wrong. Instead, you get a semi-played-out 3D platform game that can be entertaining at times and utterly frustrating at others. Probably a decent rent for a Friday night, but really not enough to warrant a purchase. Word.

DILLION



THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

79%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

Analog Control Compatible

Vibration Function Compatible

If you were thinking Psybadek was going to be a straight-up, adrenaline pumping, dekking experience, well, you were wrong. Instead, you get a semi-played-out 3D platform game that can be entertaining at times and utterly frustrating at others. Probably a decent rent for a Friday night, but really not enough to warrant a purchase. Word.

DESTREGA

PUBLISHED BY *KOEI* — DEVELOPED BY *OMEGA FORCE*

GENRE: *FIGHTING*
AVAILABLE: *NOW*

Everybody knows that Koei is most famous for its hard-core strategy simulations surrounding ancient Chinese history. In fact, some of their 16-bit strategy games were so popular that it was often difficult to find the games at retail, due to the fact that they would sell out in a matter of hours. With the PlayStation, Koei finally decided to deviate from their norm and dabble in other genres. Their first non-strategy game was a 3D fighter by the name of Dynasty Warriors, which was programmed by Omega Force, a Japanese third party developer. For a first-time effort, the game was very competitive with some of the better fighters out there — running at a brisk 60fps with a solid weapons-based fighting engine and nice polygon models. Their second effort even goes a step further, taking the traditional "enclosed arena" fighting-style (where you are constantly in close proximity to your opponent) and opening it up into a huge arena where you can either choose to fight in close combat style, or duke it out from a distance with projectile attacks. In this way, Destrega is an interesting fighting game because it isn't your typical fighting game. Let me say right off that bat that if you're looking for a Tekken or Bushido Blade clone, look elsewhere. If, however, you're willing to play something a little different, Destrega is worth a look.

After opening with a FMV sequence that would make Namco proud, the game presents the player with a wealth of options including; story mode, one player battle, versus, team battle, time attack, endurance and practice modes. While most are self explanatory, the story mode is worth mentioning. Story mode tells the story of Destrega through a series of fights interspersed with cut-scenes. The fights in story mode are driven by the plot, so you cannot pick and choose your character, but over the course of the game you will play as most of them. The cut-scenes used in-game look good and play out the story well, but at times they seem a bit long. More than once I found myself wanting the scene to end and the next fight to begin.

Fighting in Destrega is based on the "rock-paper-scissors" mentality. Every attack in the game is one of three basic forms, and each

form can overpower one of the others. This means everything can be countered. With a little patience and a lot of practice, anticipating your opponent's moves will become all part of the experience. Advanced players will appreciate the challenge this offers.

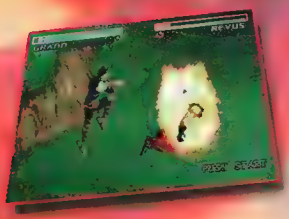
When fighting in-close the game plays similar to a standard fighting game in that punches, kicks and blocks are used. Once some distance is between the two fighters, Destrega automatically switches to a Magic Mode. While in Magic Mode the buttons that would have executed punches and kicks in close now send off magic projectiles. Magic ranges in power depending on the button combinations used. It is also unlimited and recharges quickly, which means magic must be mastered in order to win.

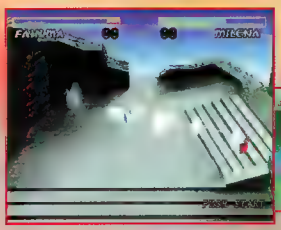
Destrega's graphics are just as good as any of the top competitors. All of the game's various characters are well detailed and animate smoothly. The camera also does a nice job of keeping up with the action, pulling way back as you get further away from your opponent and zooming in close when you're right next to him.

Although it is a fun game, Destrega does have a few flaws, the most important of which is play balance. There are a number of devastating attacks and combos that can easily take off 50% or more. Thing is, it is just as easy to pull off a massive attack as it is to fire a simple projectile. Because of the simplicity of the controls, winning a match can come down to who manages to land the first hit. Breaking out of an attack is nearly impossible once the pummeling has begun. The super attacks should be more difficult to execute. Once I discovered the super, the computer opponent became quite easy. Landing two supers will take out most any opponent.

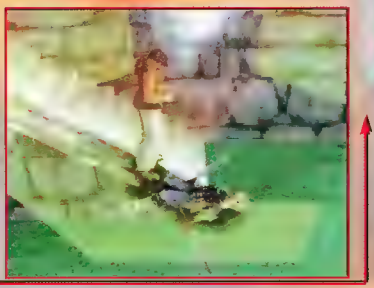
Another minor problem with the game is the auto switching between close-in fighting and magic attacks. I would have much preferred a button that allowed manual switching. More than once I slightly misjudged the distance between the two characters and ended up using the wrong attack. Not a major problem, but enough of an annoyance to grate on you after awhile. As is typical of fighting games, the real fun in Destrega comes when you have a second player to battle. The computer just can't hold a candle to the challenge of fighting against a real, live human being.

In the end, Destrega isn't going to knock any of the fighting greats from their thrones, but it is a nice change of pace from the standard clones. My advice: put down Tekken 3 and give this one a look, it just might surprise you.





ADAM



PS EXTREME — THE BOTTOM LINE

85%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 or 2 Players
- Analog Controller Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

...the real fun in Destrega comes when you have a second player to battle. The computer just can't hold a candle to the challenge of fighting against a real, live human being. In the end, Destrega isn't going to knock any of the fighting greats from their thrones, but it is a nice change of pace from the standard clones. My advice: put down Tekken 3 and give this one a look, it just might surprise you.

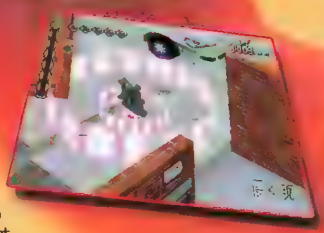
EXRATED

MR. DOMINO

PUBLISHED BY *ACCLAIM* — DEVELOPED BY *ART DINK*

GENRE: *PUZZLE*
AVAILABLE: *NOW*

Puzzle games have an interesting history on the PlayStation; not a lot of them, but those that have come out are, by and large, good titles with decent sales numbers. After all, most of the puzzle games are 2D and really don't take advantage of the PlayStation's seemingly limitless talents. That being said, however, there have been some fantastically addictive puzzlers developed for the system. Bust a Move 2 from Acclaim (the king of Puzzle games as far as Dimension Publishing is concerned), Roll Away from Psygnosis and Super Puzzle Fighter from Capcom are the best of the bunch, but even more obscure titles such as Tecmo's Stackers and THQ's Devil Dice are more than worthy of a purchase. The latest entry in this category is Mr. Domino from Acclaim — a quirky game from those same wacky characters that brought us Tail of the Sun, Carnage Heart and Aquanaut's Holiday — you guessed it, Art Dink.



The key to a good puzzle game is the inherent replay value and unadulterated addictive nature of the play mechanics. You remember the feeling; "just one more game, no maybe two more!" Well, the way Mr. Domino is set up, you can at least count on the addictiveness. There are only six levels in the game, but each one offers a thoroughly entertaining experience. In each level, there are a number of switches that need to be triggered by placing your dominoes in their path, making the last one fall on the switch. When you do this, you must then set them in motion. All the while, you are racing the clock, while doing your best to avoid a number of traps placed throughout each level. it gets pretty insane at times, as you're running around like a mad man trying to avoid the inherent dangers and still trigger your switches in time. This is certainly the addictive part of the game. There is also an action/platform element built in, with the necessity of having to avoid many traps along the way. This certainly makes Mr. Domino a little different than the rest, but let's face it, it's not exactly why you'd buy a puzzle game in the first place.

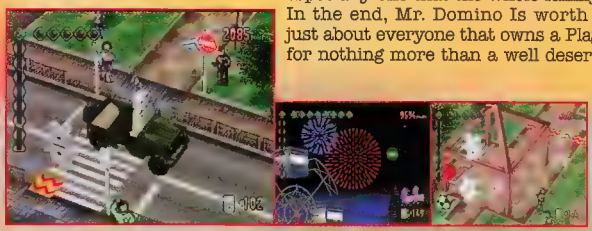
Where the real fun and challenge comes in, is trying to rack up huge points (thus getting a high ranking at the end of the level) by setting up insane combos. This is done by strategically placing the

limited amount of dominoes you have in a non-stop string around the level, making sure you have them placed in a perfect precession, so that you can activate more than one switch at a time. Triggering more than one switch typically isn't too difficult. However, getting all of the switches in one fell swoop is a huge challenge and, at first, you'll definitely want to keep trying just for the satisfaction of accomplishing it. Replay value, however, is another thing altogether. As I mentioned earlier, there are only six levels and a limited number of characters. Even with the action/platform element, it's still very difficult to get the feeling that you are playing a new game every time out. After you're done with the six levels, you're pretty much done for good. There aren't a lot of reasons to go back.

Graphically, the game is presented in an isometric, 3/4 view with tight camera control. You won't get lost, and even the most inexperienced gamer in your house will have no trouble following along. Some of the "events" that happen when you trigger a switch are actually quite fun to watch and add to the uniqueness of the game. In one level, you're running through "Grandpa's House" and, by setting off one switch, you cause a VCR to spit out a tape and slam dad in the noggin', another will cause sister to magically change out of her school uniform to a t-shirt and panties while her teddy bear blows kisses — kooky, but very cool.

Mr. Domino is one of those games that really doesn't require an instruction manual; just dive in and start playing. The game is pretty much that simple, which is precisely what will make it a retail success. It makes for a great escape from the Tomb Raiders and Metal Gears of the world. If I had to fault the game (and I do because that's my job), it would definitely be in the area of shelf life. The younger gamers out there will be able to play it for a while, but the more experienced gamer will finish rather quickly. Ultimately, replay value is the downfall of most puzzle games and has only really been mastered by Bust A Move and Roll Away (over 160 levels).

The best part about Mr. Domino is that it is being released at a retail price point of $24.95 or less. This almost makes it a discretionary purchase. It certainly makes it easier to digest the limited shelf life. This is a trend that a number of publishers are beginning to follow and one that makes a whole lot of sense as far as we're concerned. There aren't many new games on any system that you can enjoy for that little dinero, especially one that the whole family can play! In the end, Mr. Domino Is worth a look for just about everyone that owns a PlayStation, if for nothing more than a well deserved break.



ALEX

THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

89%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1or2 Players
- Analog Controller Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

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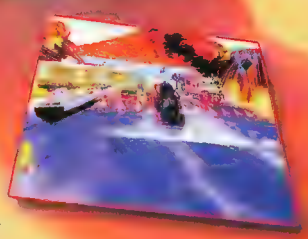
EXRATED

DEAD IN THE WATER

PUBLISHED BY *ASC GAMES* — DEVELOPED BY *PLAYER ONE*

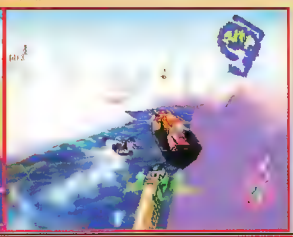
GENRE:
VEHICLE COMBAT
AVAILABLE:
NOW

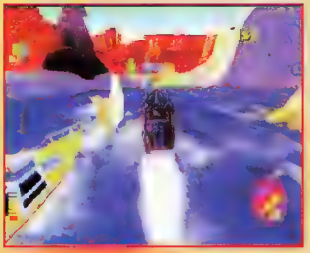
Vehicle combat games certainly have come into the light of day ever since Sony/Single Trac's Twisted Metal debuted a few years back. It seems that a lot of game developers and publishers are looking to capitalize on the phenomenon with their own variation of the game — including ASC. In conjunction with developer Player One (of Robotron X infamy), they have entered the circuit with their own contender, Dead in the Water, a vehicle shooter with a twist. Instead of dropping the player in an "armed to the teeth" personalized car and blasting it out against a bevy of kooky characters, across a variety of themed environments on rubber-scorched asphalt (phew), Dead in the Water drops the player into his own "armed to the teeth" personalized boat and blasts it out againsnt a bevy of kooky characters across a variety of themed environments — only on top of water. In addition to battling it out with a circuit of 13 other "boats", the player is racing for first place and cash, which he/she can then use to purchase better, badder and stronger parts.



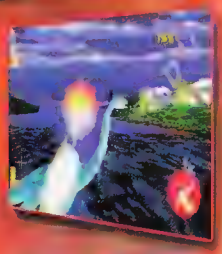
Although most gamers don't require any rhyme or reason to race and blow things up, Player One have attempted to offer up a story behind the watery madness. It goes something like this: You receive a strange invitation in the mail with no return address. On the front of the card is a symbol of a skull and a message inside which reads, "The rules are simple: destroy everything." The location of the first battle is scrawled across the bottom. For years, rumors have circulated regarding a tournament that takes place once a year, run by a mysterious organization whose headquarters exsist in the center of the Bermuda Triangle. The reward for competing is cold, hard cash. However, the ultimate prize, if you survive, is the revelation of an age-old secret. How could you turn such an offer down? Without hesitation, you grab your keys, quickly prepare your boat, load the guns and get set to race against 13 of the most ruthless and outrageous boat drivers in the world. It's either win and capture the prize, or go down in flames and end up Dead in the Water (get it?).

Let's start this review by getting the negatives out of the way first, then focus on the positives. Dead in the Water (the name alone will surely be the brunt of a few jokes — much like Jaleco's Irritating Stick), for all of the action that it offers up, is just not that much fun. It's mostly a case of "been there done that", coupled with some pretty bad graphic glitches (including obscene pop-up and draw-in distance). While the game is





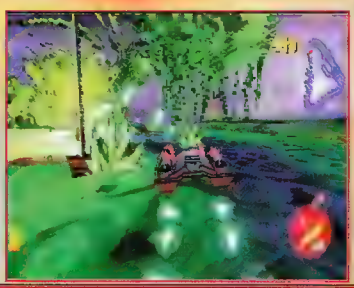
challenging and has all of the prerequisites — Deathmatch and Tournament modes, the ability to upgrade your vehicle, a host of weapons and pick ups, special moves and bonuses which reward you with extra cash, nine different courses on which to race, and a two-player split-screen option as well as a link-up mode — it just doesn't quite cut the mustard. How many times are we going to be asked to race against a set of stereotypical goons, such as the redneck Crotchet Family, the afro-sporting, Shaft wannabe, Ebony Justice, or the trio of busty Baywatch babes, Kandy, Brandy and Mandy? Each of these characters spout their own "comical" soundbites as they perform feats, but they're so jumbled that it's difficult to make out what anybody is saying. In addition, the collision detection seems to be a bit off and it's very easy to find yourself frustratingly stuck in the middle of a solid object, while you watch as you go from first place to last in a matter of seconds. The control is also suspect. The game uses all of the pad's buttons for firing weapons, selecting weapons, activating turbos, etc., but doesn't allow you to assign one for hitting the gas, thus making you press up on the pad or thumbstick instead. In the heat of battle, it's easy for your thumb to accidently slip off the stick, letting the competition pass you by in an instant. One last complaint, which is minor but still an irritant: the game has unbearably long load times, even when you are just trying to cycle through the available characters.



Now, for the good stuff: For what it's worth, Dead in the Water sports some of the best-looking and most realistic water effects created on the PlayStation. Realistic water is one of, if not the toughest effect to create on the PlayStation. With the exception of Naughty Dog's efforts on Crash Bandicoot 3 and this title, there isn't one game that has been able to accurately recreate the look and feel of H2O on the console. Nintendo's Wave Race is still the hands-down winner in this category and it's most likely we'll have to wait for the next PlayStation to reach that benchmark. In the meantime, Dead in the Water shows how close it's possible to come and does a great job of displaying the way boats, projectiles and environments effect the physics of water. More often than not, a weapon or missile will send shockwaves and ripples across the particular track you are on, either thrusting your boat high into the air or down underneath the water. It's a great effect, but not enough to make this game a must-have purchase.

In the end, what ASC Games and Player One have here is another "me too" vehicular combat game that valiantly tries to be a little different by adding the effects of water. Unfortunately, it's just not enough. It seems as though the focus was on the physics and not the game itself. If you parry this with a definite lack of polish and glitchy graphic break-up, the title ends up in the "rent first" category. If you can't get enough of racing and vehicular combat games, Dead in the Water might just hold your interest but, for everyone else, my advice would be to definitely check this one out first before laying down your hard-earned cash.

GREG



THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

76%

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

Analog Controller Compatible

Vibration Function Compatible

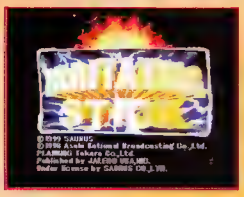
In the end, what ASC Games and Player One have here is another "me too" vehicular combat game that valiantly tries to be a little different by adding the effects of water. Unfortunately, it's just not enough. It seems as though the focus was on the physics and not the game itself. If you parry this with a definite lack of polish and glitchy graphic break-up, the title ends up in the "rent first" category. If you can't get enough of racing and vehicular combat games, Dead in the Water might just hold your interest but, for everyone else, my advice would be to definitely check this one out first before laying down your hard-earned cash.

EXTRA TIED

IRRITATING STICK

PUBLISHED BY JALECO — DEVELOPED BY SAURUS

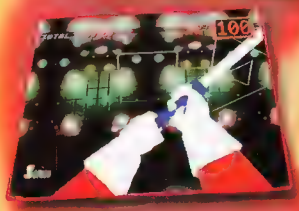
GENRE: PUZZLE
AVAILABLE: NOW



If nothing else, this game ought to win an award for the strangest title. Even the most staid gamer will laugh aloud upon hearing the announcer say "Welcome to...Irritating St-i-i-ck!" With a name like that, it has to be good, right? Well...

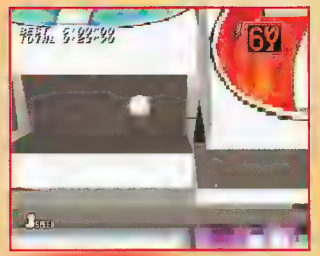
Remember "Operation"? That game where you use tweezers to remove items from a patient's body without touching the sides? The idea here is similar, except that you have to guide a rod through a maze without touching walls or other obstacles. That seems a fairly superficial concept to base a game upon doesn't it? The designers tried to add depth by offering options such as a 2-player competitive mode, a tournament mode, and a course editor. The latter allows you to select 64 track shapes and 13 obstacles with which to modify four existing tracks.

The graphics are as basic as they come. The maze looks like a wire sculpture and the stick is a small white circle which travels between the rails. There are some stage lights in the background to add a little color. Believe it or not, there is some "draw in" present. In some of the mazes, the track ahead doesn't appear until you enter it. The stick always stays in the center of the screen while the maze scrolls from right to left. There are seven viewpoints, or degrees of zoom, to choose from: the closer you are, the easier it is to maneuver but the harder it is to see what is ahead. At any time, you can use the triangle button to pause and "step back" from the maze to view upcoming obstacles at an angle.



Aside from the movement control, there are buttons to increase and decrease speed. Moving through the maze at a high speed increases the likelihood of a collision with the sides, but moving too slow will cause you to run out of time. As with most racing games, you've got to learn how to slow down as you approach the more difficult obstacles and speed up on the "straight-aways." Analog controllers are definitely recommended. Not only is digital control problematic when it comes to making smooth transitions from diagonal to cardinal directions, but the missing Dual Shock vibration is an important element of the game.

The announcer, apparently from the Ridge Racer school of broadcasting, is extremely annoying. In addition, his comments often fail to keep up with your progress — he'll be shouting "WATCH OUT! YOU'RE TOO CLOSE TO THE WALL!!!" long after you've made it through. Thankfully, you can turn his voice off. The remaining music is boring and nondescript, but at least it isn't irritating.



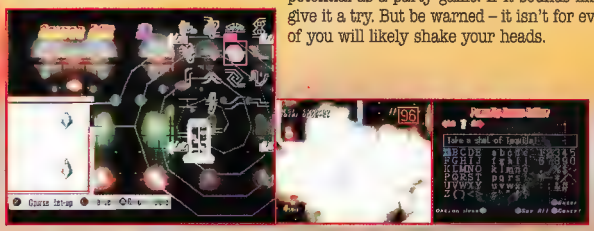
There are only five courses, although the AI Course supposedly changes its layout every time you play. The multi-player game is where any replay value will be found. The two-player game takes place on a horizontally-split-screen, which makes things more difficult, since less of the maze is visible. Special icons appear which allow you to distract your opponent with "irritants" — inertia, a crazy camera, hallucinations (multiple sticks appear), and spot lights (most of the maze is dark). Although up to 8 people can compete in the tournament, only two can play at the same time.

One interesting option is the ability to create and modify the "penalty" messages that are given to the loser. One of six possible penalties is randomly chosen via a spinning wheel when the game ends. If you want to take the time to get creative, you can turn Irritating Stick into a more "adult" game by creating punishments such as "Take another shot of Tequila," or "Remove one item of clothing." (Make sure you first check to see who you are playing the game against).

As you might have guessed, Irritating Stick works best as a party game. However, it is not quite on the level of Poy Poy or Point Blank. It is more like a challenge you would find at a carnival or one of those barroom testers which judge your reaction time after having a few drinks. I can just see it: "Bartender, I want my keys back." "Okay, but first you've got to beat the Irritating Stick." It is interesting mainly as a gimmick, but not as an entire videogame..

Puzzle games attract a lot of people who are otherwise hesitant to play other videogames due to the hand-eye coordination required. You don't have to be a virtuoso with a controller in order to play Tetris, for example, since it is more of a cerebral challenge. Irritating Stick is quite the opposite — it is entirely a matter of coordination. Unfortunately, that makes it a game which won't please a lot of people. Puzzle enthusiasts who want a mental contest will be disappointed. At the same time, hard-core gamers who enjoy testing their physical coordination will rather play something else. Honestly — if you like games which require you to maneuver through a course of obstacles, would you rather race sports cars on exotic tracks or would you prefer to move a stick through a maze?

Now the difficult part — assigning a rating. The graphics and music are fine and the gameplay is reasonably interesting and challenging. Does that mean it deserves a Gold? No — it just isn't a must-buy. Bronze also seems inappropriate since Irritating Stick doesn't suffer from any flaws. It does what it purports to do — replicating the challenge of guiding a stick through a maze. However, it is probably the shallowest videogame I've played. Consider it a videogame version of tic-tac-toe: Even if the audio-visuals were nice, you would still ask yourself (like V'ger) "Is there nothing more?" The same goes for Irritating Stick. I'm giving it the lowest possible silver to recognize its uniqueness, the replay value of the course editor and two-player contest, and its potential as a party game. If it sounds like fun to you, give it a try. But be warned – it isn't for everyone. Most of you will likely shake your heads.



MARK

THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

80%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1or2 Players
- Analog Control Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

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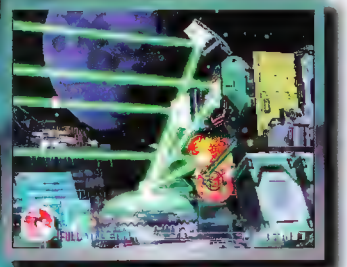
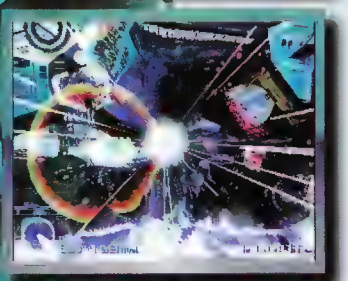
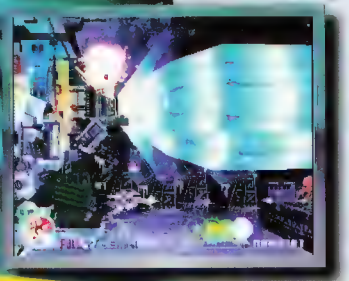
SILVER







R-TYPE Δ

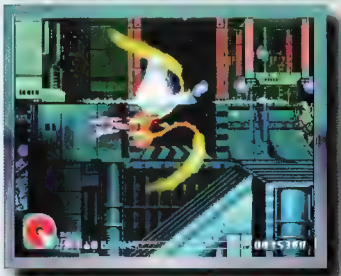
IREM • AVAILABLE NOW • JAPAN

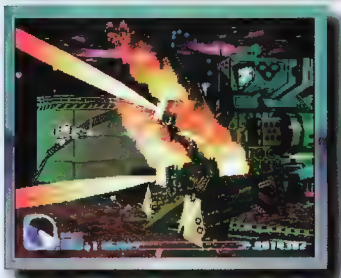
Irem's R-Type series has long been one of the greatest and most challenging of arcade shooters. Crazy-fast action, tons of enemies, gigantic bosses, with one hard to reach weak spot, and the floating dingleberry are all part and parcel of the series.

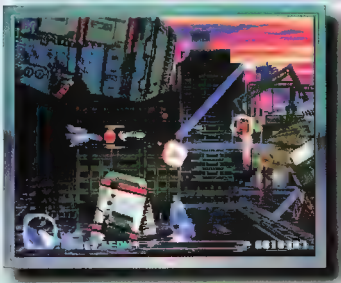
R-Type Delta walks the walk that the new breed of shooters (like Einhander and Raystorm) have trampled in 3D space, with its hallmark blend of hectic action and cybernetic style. R-Type Delta maintains close relations with its "feed me more quarters" heritage.

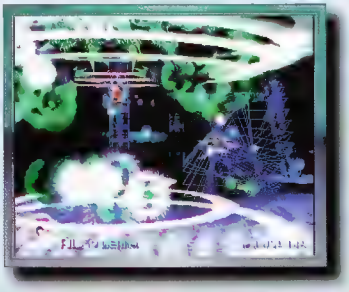
R-Type is a game that will have the less patient gamers replacing broken controllers that have been hurled at the walls in frustration. While you're faced with an unrelenting horde of enemies, the evil, evil designers of the game have only seen fit to provide the player with a measley handful of continues.

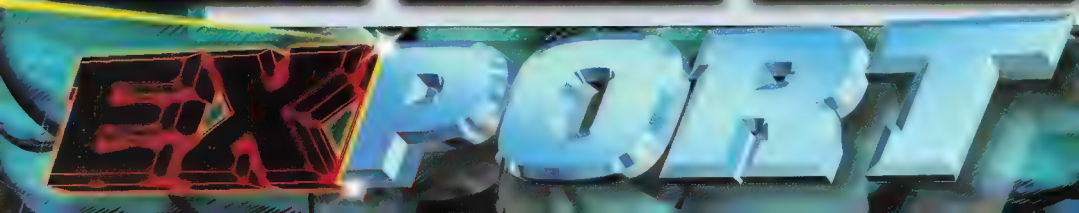
The R-Type world has become a 3D rendered one, but it still has a highly detailed sci-fi look to it. There are all sorts of little touches that are hard to appreciate while laser fire is raining on your head, but they stand out with repeated play. This is a challenging game and is worth a look if you're a big hooter or R-Type fan.









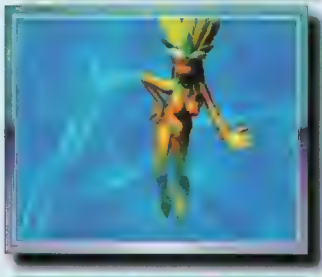


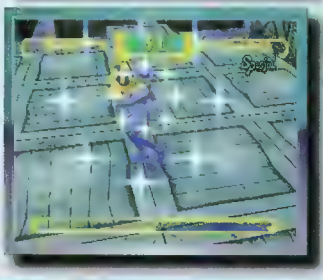
KONAMI • AVAILABLE NOW • JAPAN

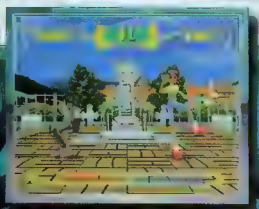
The Japanese have gone koo-koo for music/dance titles since Parappa stormed the gaming world. Konami has embraced this new category with two games that have become hugely popular in Japanese arcades. The first, BeatMania, is a DJ scratching/puzzle game, while their newest title is called simply "Dance! Dance! Dance!"

Dance! Dance! Dance! closely resembles Bust A Move (or Bust A Groove as it's known here in the States). You select a character and compete against another dancer in a groove off, pressing the buttons on the controller in time with the music's beat. Each character represents a different style of music and dance, including hip hop, jazz, tap, break dancing and... Flamenco? The music isn't as fresh as Bust A Groove, but there is an option that allows you to plug in your own music CDs, so you can dance along to Slayer, Skinny Puppy or Burt Bacharach, as you desire.

The major difference between Bust A Groove and Dance! is that, in Konami's game, there are no on-screen prompts to get you moving. Instead, the entire game is freestyle, so you're able to select your own moves, instead of following along with pre-assigned combinations. While this opens the game up for skillful players, it's very hard to determine the correct sequence of inputs to get your character dancing.

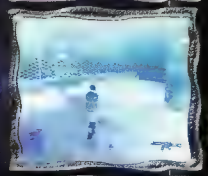


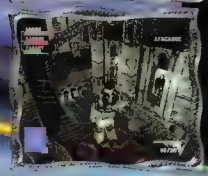




989 STUDIOS

syphon filter





This month's excerpt is a conversation with Connie Booth, executive producer on 989 Studios' Syphon Filter. For those of you unfamiliar with the title, Syphon Filter is an action adventure spy thriller. While it is similar in some respects to both Metal Gear Solid and Goldeneye the game is more than a simple clone. It is one of the PlayStation's killer titles for 1999.

PSEX: What sets Syphon Filter apart from Metal Gear Solid? What's going to stop people from saying "Oh, it's just a clone of Metal Gear?"

Connie: Syphon Filter is very action oriented. I would say the game is about 80% action and 20% stealth. And of the action its about 60% gunplay and about 40% environmental puzzles (climbing things, rolling away from gunfire, that sort of thing). That's what I would identify as our main distinction. The focus on action will distinguish Syphon Filter from games that are more strategy or stealth oriented. But the inclusion of the stealth aspects of the game differentiate us from the games that are just straight shooters. We're hoping Syphon Filter will stand alone.

PSEX: Would you describe Syphon Filter as an action game then?

Connie: Syphon Filter is definitely a third person action adventure. With the emphasis on action.

PSEX: Is this an original story?

Connie: It is an original story, and we credit our art director, John Garvin (Eidetic), with writing both the backstory and the script for the briefings, radio transmissions and movies that appear throughout the game. The story went through multiple iterations. It was always our objective to have a very tense thriller starring a special agent. The viral component of the story came in about halfway through development. We started out simply with explosives and then decided viruses were much more sexy.

PSEX: What kind of environments can players expect?

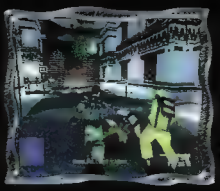
Connie: The focus in the environments is to give a very realistic feel to the game. We did not want use science fiction or fantasy at all. We wanted to give Syphon Filter a gritty kind of current day feel with a realistic setting, geopolitically speaking. The first half of the game takes place mainly in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area and the second half of the game takes place in Kazahkstan, one of the breakaway republics in what was formerly the Soviet Union. You can expect to see a subway, a city park and there's a fairly extensive museum. Those are all on the East Coast of the United States. Eventually you trace the conspiracy from the eastern seaboard of the United States to Kazahkstan and the environments you visit there are a military base that's been taken over by the mercenary terrorists that you're fighting, an abandoned church that has been converted into a laboratory and prison by the same terrorists and an extensive warehouse, cave and silo complex. These are former Soviet installations that have been taken over by the terrorists. It's a pretty wide variety of urban and non-urban environments.

PSEX: I noticed a lot of glass smashing and things blowing up in the beginning of the game. Is the environmental interactivity fairly superficial or does it play an important part in the game?

Connie: I don't consider it to be superficial. A couple of the tricks that Eidetic came up with early on were incorporated globally throughout the game. For example, every piece of glass in the entire game can be shot out. Every light in the game can be shot out. In some cases that's strategic because you can shoot out a light and throw an area into darkness and evade detection.

EXCERPT

You are equipped with a flashlight so you can illuminate the area that you've darkened. We use the dynamic lighting system in the game quite a bit. We have a number of puzzles in which you'll enter what looks to be a relatively dark, shadowy area but if you get out your flashlight you'll illuminate an element of the environment that's actually key to the adventure. In that sense we use the environment. Another thing that we set out to do from the beginning was to get a lot more vertical gameplay into the environment. For example, in the museum, there might be balconies tiered 2 or 3 stories up and you're in an atrium in the middle shooting at guys who are above you, even up on catwalks above the very top of the museum. At the time we started the game we really hadn't seen anything like that yet and I think it's still fairly rare.

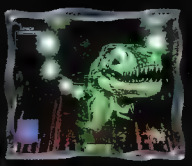


PSEX: Is the gameplay linear level to level or do you ever cross back and forth between areas?

Connie: Since the game is story based, the idea is for you to proceed through the game level by level. You can always return to a previous level, but it's not necessary. Once you've passed the level you're free to go forward.

PSEX: What about weapons? What kind of toys does Gabriel get to use?

Connie: Ah, those are fun. Well you have the default weapons, which are a 9mm silenced pistol, a sniper rifle (which has a picture in picture zoom capability that can be combined with your strafe move to allow you to peek around corners without being detected), and then you have a taser, which is sort of your last resort weapon. If you run out of ammunition you can use your taser to electrocute enemies at close range. From there you acquire weapons by finding them and by taking them off your enemies. In a lot of cases you're picking up Soviet made weapons that the terrorists have brought into the country. You will pick up an infrared rifle, which is similar to the sniper rifle, but it allows you to detect heat. Characters will stand out as white hot against sort of a green background. That's kind of a fun one. You pick up grenades at various times. Gas grenades are particularly effective — my mom should really not read this interview — and then of course there is the shotgun. If you use the shotgun, which is fairly powerful, it doesn't require nearly as many hits to take out an enemy. The enemies also have a quite interesting reaction to the shotgun which involves flying backward after taking a hit. And of course, there is the grenade launcher. The grenade launcher is a weapon that you really need to use later in the game, but we've actually hidden it in the first level. Players who find that thing can run around and just basically blow grenades all over the subway street level.



PSEX: What about the game's soundtrack?

Connie: What's really special about our MIDI soundtrack is that the music changes with the intensity of the action. It's tied to the number of people who have detected you and the number of gunshots being exchanged, so if you're sneaking through a level and suddenly detected, the music will transition from an ambient kind of feeling to a much more intense beat in real time.

PSEX: How does the enemy AI work in the game? Is it 'hunt and kill' or will the enemies coordinate with each other?

Connie: Well, the enemies vary pretty widely. For one thing our NPCs are divided into friendlies and non friendlies. On the friendly side you have NPCs who are actually helping you. For example on the first level you have the haz-mat guys running around fighting the terrorists and also cooperating with you. We're pretty proud of the friendly NPC behavior. It let us make some of our puzzles much more interesting then they would have otherwise been. For example, in the park level we originally had the puzzle set up so Gabe had to find the viral bombs and defuse them. Now Gabe finds the viral bombs, sends up a radio signal and a haz-mat guy comes in and defuses them. Your mission once you've found the bombs is to provide cover fire for the haz-mat guy until he can defuse the bombs. We found that having that kind of interaction with a friendly NPC really made the gameplay much deeper. On the bad guy side it's pretty complicated. Some of the enemies will patrol a certain area, other enemies are generated based on your actions. Enemies can hear you so if you use an unsilenced weapon in place of a silenced weapon you'll be detected. For example, in the museum level you're following this industrialist who's a key figure in the game. If you make a sound, you'll be detected and he'll take off and you will have failed the mission parameters. The enemies are capable of visual identification as well. If they see you they will come after you. Enemies will take evasive maneuvers. Enemies aren't necessarily going to run straight at you and wait to be blown away. The enemies are smart enough to duck behind objects to outflank you. Four or five enemies will work together. In the museum there's a scene where you are in a security room, the door blasts open and five guys come bursting through the door. Actually we're pretty proud of that because I haven't seen another game where you can have five enemies come in at once that are that articulated and behave that independently.

PSEX: Why is a guy always the hero and a girl the supporting character? Why aren't we seeing a female lead here instead of a male lead?

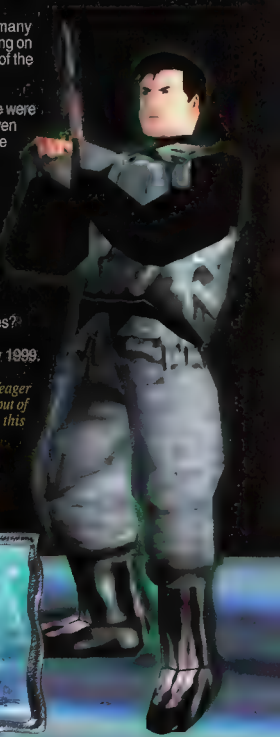
Connie: Tomb Raider. We started this game right after Tomb Raider 1 had shipped. We actually wanted to have a female character and decided that we would run the risk of being looked at as a Tomb Raider clone, which 2 years down the line isn't really so much of an issue, but at the time we decided to go with a male character to distinguish ourselves.

PSEX: So Syphon Filter has been in production for quite awhile?

Connie: Its been about two years. We started the project in January 1997.

PSEX: About how many people have been working on the title over the course of the last two years?

Connie: If you take the Eidetic team there were probably about 14-16 people at any given time on the project and then if you take the 989 Studios team you're running anywhere from 2 to 6 at a time, including the sound supervisor, music composer, sound effects crew, and the guys in the motion capture studio. Plus you need to add in all the voice actors. There were probably 8 to 10 voice actors and 2 motion capture actors involved in the project.



PSEX: When do you expect it on shelves?

Connie: Syphon Filter ships in February 1999.

We'd like to thank Connie Booth, Darren Yeager and the Eidetic team for taking the time out of their busy schedule to grant us this interview.

The PS*Extreme* Historical Ranking Chart

EXCAVATE is the section where we dig up the last six months of our old ratings and present them on one easy-to-read page, along with a little explanation/breakdown of our rating system. Use this as your buying guide throughout the year and as a reference for those older games that you might have missed (or wish you had).

PLATINUM GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	December 1998	98%
Metal Gear Solid	December 1998	98%
Spyro the Dragon	October 1998	98%
NFL Gameday 99	October 1998	98%
NFL Blitz	October 1998	98%
Tomb Raider III	January 1999	98%
Medievil	November 1998	98%
GOLD GAMES	**ISSUE**	**RATING**
Test Drive 5	December 1998	97%
Bust A Groove	January 1999	96%
Colony Wars: Vengeance	December 1998	96%
A Bug's Life	December 1998	95%
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill	December 1998	95%
NHL FaceOff 99	December 1998	95%
NCAA Gamebreaker 99	January 1999	95%
Parasite Eve	September 1998	94%
NFL Xtreme	August 1998	94%
Guilty Gear	December 1998	93%
Rival Schools	November 1998	93%
Streak	December 1998	92%
WWF WarZone	September 1998	92%
Brunswick Pro Circuit Bowling	November 1998	92%
Cool Boarders 3	November 1998	92%
Rally Cross 2	January 1999	92%
NBA Live 99	January 1999	92%
Knockout Kings	January 1999	92%
Assault Retribution	December 1998	91%
Wild 9	December 1998	91%
Test Drive: Off Road 2	December 1998	91%
Moto Racer 2	November 1998	90%
The Fifth Element	December 1998	90%
Heart of Darkness	September 1998	90%
Kula World	September 1998	90%
G Darius	October 1998	90%
Darkstalkers 3	January 1999	90%
Bushido Blade 2	November 1998	90%
Rug Rats	January 1999	90%
Bust A Move 4	January 1999	90%
The Unholy War	November 1998	90%
SILVER GAMES	**ISSUE**	**RATING**
Tenchu: Stealth Assassins	November 1998	89%
Trap Gunner	October 1998	89%
Turbo Prop Racing	August 1998	89%
C: The Contra Adventure	September 1998	88%
Backstreet Billiards	December 1998	87%
Team Losi RC Racer	October 1998	87%
Madden NFL 99	October 1998	87%
Kartia: The Word of Fate	August 1998	87%
NHL 99	December 1998	86%
NCAA Football 99	September 1998	86%
International Superstar Soccer Pro '98	August 1998	86%
Brigandine	January 1999	88%
Pool Hustler	December 1998	85%
Motorhead	November 1998	85%
Thunder Force V	October 1998	85%
Elemental Gearbolt	August 1998	85%
Command & Conquer: Retaliation	October 1998	85%
Asteroids	January 1999	85%
S.C.A.R.S.	November 1998	84%
Resident Evil and Resident Evil 2 Dual Shock	October 1998	84%
Xenogears	December 1998	83%
NASCAR 99	November 1998	83%
Dragonseeds	December 1998	83%
Armored Core: Project Phantasma	January 1999	83%
Running Wild	December 1998	82%
Grand Theft Auto	August 1998	82%
Mortal Kombat 4	August 1998	82%
Future Cop: LAPD	October 1998	82%
Activision Classics	November 1998	82%
Ninja	November 1998	82%
Formula 1 98	January 1999	82%
Twisted Metal 3	January 1999	82%
Brave Fencer: Musashi	December 1998	81%
Devil Dice	October 1998	81%
Touring Car Championship	September 1998	81%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 99	January 1999	81%
Pocket Fighter	August 1998	80%
BRONZE GAMES	**ISSUE**	**RATING**
Animaniacs: Ten Pin Alley	January 1999	79%
Spice World	October 1998	79%
WarGames	September 1998	79%
Batman and Robin	October 1998	79%
Sentinel Returns	August 1998	76%
Street Fighter Collection 2	October 1998	75%
Bottom of the 9th 99	September 1998	75%
Master of Monsters	November 1998	75%
Crime Killers	September 1998	74%
Small Soldiers	December 1998	74%
Bomberman World	November 1998	72%
Super Cross 98	August 1998	71%
O.D T	December 1998	70%
TIN GAMES	**ISSUE**	**RATING**
Tales of Destiny	November 1998	69%
Adidas Power Soccer 98	August 1998	68%
Apocalypse	January 1999	49%
Circuit Breakers	August 1998	49%

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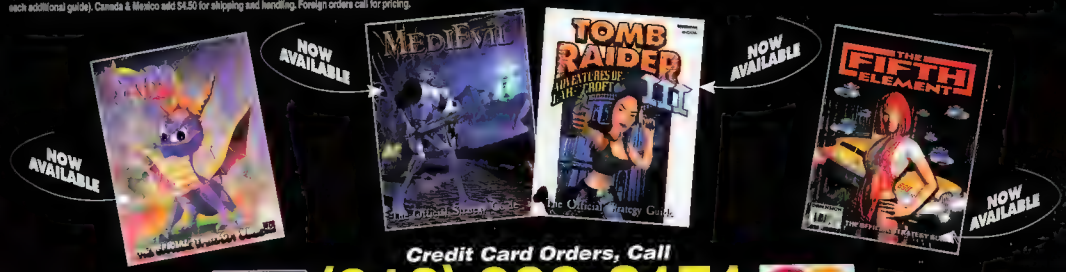

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